

**Anticipating the Revolt: Trends in Military Mutinies in
West and Central Africa, 1960-2012**

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**Thesis Submitted for Degree of PhD in African Studies
School of Social and Political Science
University of Edinburgh
2014**

Abstract

This thesis examines patterns of military mutinies in West and Central Africa from 1960 to 2012. The research explores the ways in which primarily rank and file soldiers express their discontent within a military structure. The view from the lower ranks has been neglected within research on African militaries, but is key to comprehending how militaries function, and particularly to understanding internal struggles which can threaten their ability to function effectively. The thesis differentiates mutinies from coups and makes the case that mutinies deserve scholarly attention separate from coups due to variations between the two events as regards participants, tactics, and goals. The research moves away from the more standard approach of viewing mutinies as singular, exceptional events, and instead examines mutinies as a recurring phenomenon in the region. Using an original fifty-two year dataset, the thesis examines trends in when and why mutinies most often occur in West and Central Africa. While there are a variety of factors that go into a unit's decision to revolt, the thesis identifies several situations that may serve as triggers for mutinies. Particular attention is paid to a trend of mutinies following deployments and the link between mutinies and democratization. The dataset is complemented by three case studies: Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, and The Gambia, developed through field research involving interviews with former mutineers and others familiar with the events. They allow for more detailed analysis of incidents of mutiny, including the perspective of those involved.

The thesis shows that mutineers in West and Central Africa are usually driven by a combination of material demands and shared values concerning perceived injustice. Mutineers' complaints in West and Central Africa are often grounded in a history in which divisions between the ranks have increased as the military has become involved in politics. Close examination shows that mutinies are often based on larger issues than their initial grievance suggests. This helps explain why their impact is often more significant than might be expected. Using the dataset and case studies, the thesis analyzes trends in tactics used during mutinies. While some tactics have remained consistently popular amongst mutineers throughout the last half-century, the largest change in tactics involves the incorporation of media and new technologies into mutinies. Despite tactical shifts over the last couple of decades, 'traditional' and new tactics share a common goal of communication. This thesis will demonstrate that mutinies serve as a method by which soldiers attempt to open a dialogue with their hierarchy and vocalize their expectations, in an environment that intentionally stifles the voices of the junior members.

Declaration

The thesis has been composed by myself from the results of my own work, except where otherwise acknowledges. It has not been submitted in any previous applications for a degree.

Signed:

Date: 24-9-14

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my supervisors, Paul Nugent and Sara Dorman. I feel very fortunate to have had such a supportive and constructive team to challenge, shape, and guide my work. I am also grateful for the insightful feedback and encouragement from Funmi Olonisakin and Gerhard Anders during my viva.

It was a privilege to have had the opportunity to be a part of the Centre of African Studies. The weekly seminars, retreats, and reading groups continually provided inspiration and broadened my understanding of Africa. I have no doubt that the friendships I developed with fellow PhD students will be lifelong. Thanks to them for the motivation, conversations, and memorable times in and out of the office.

I am particularly beholden to those who assisted me during field research and helped facilitate contacts. Mana, Issa, Benjamin, Matt, Ismaila, Omar, Abdou, and Luke all greatly contributed to my research and well-being while in West Africa. While most will go unnamed in this thesis, I am indebted to the interviewees who generously and patiently shared their stories and perceptions.

Special thanks to Patrick McGowan who generously shared the details of his full coup dataset with me. It was invaluable in developing my arguments and methodology.

I am thankful for the financial support of the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation and the Allan and Nesta Fergusson Charitable Trust.

Lastly, I am endlessly grateful to my family for their unconditional support, encouragement and love.

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Abbreviations

AFISMA	African-led International Support Mission to Mali
AFPRC	Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (The Gambia)
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
APC	All Peoples' Congress (Sierra Leone)
AU	African Union
CGT-B	Confédération Générale du Travail du Burkina
CNR	Conseil National de la Révolution (Burkina Faso)
CO	Commanding Officer
ECOMIL	Economic Community of West African States Mission in Liberia
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GNA	Gambian National Army
GNG	Gambian National Gendarmerie
GRSP	Gambia Revolutionary Socialist Party
ISU	Internal Security Unit (Sierra Leone)
MBDHP	Mouvement Burkinabé des Droits de l'Homme et des Peuples
MINURCA	United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic
MINUSMA	United Nations Stabilization Mission in Mali
MOJA	Movement for Justice in Africa
NATAG	Nigerian Army Training Assistance Group
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NPFL	National Patriotic Liberation Front
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council (Sierra Leone)
ONUC	United Nations Operation in the Congo
PANAFU	Pan African Union
PPP	Peoples' Progressive Party (The Gambia)
PSO	Peace Support Operation
RSP	Régiment de Sécurité Présidentiel
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
RWAFF	Royal West African Frontier Force
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
SSD	Special Security Division (Sierra Leone)
TSG	Tactical Support Group (The Gambia)
UN	United Nations
UNMIL	United National Mission in Liberia
UNOMIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia

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Chapter One- Introduction

1.1. The Popular Intrigue and Academic Neglect of Mutinies

Militaries have played a significant role in shaping post-independent African states and there is a correspondingly large amount of academic literature on African militaries. Within this research coups d'état have been a primary focus as researchers have struggled to determine why Africa has experienced more coups than any other continent over the last half century.¹ The large number of successful coups has led to another important concentration, the military as political leaders.² With no shortage of case studies to draw from, academics have proposed various typologies to help identify different ways military regimes have ruled once in control of a state.³ Despite a variety of military leadership styles, there is a general consensus that military heads of state overall have not had a stronger record than civilians in economic management or the advancement of political and civil liberties.⁴ In recent decades academic research, as well as policy analysis, has shifted focus to military disengagement from politics.⁵ In contrast to studies of the military's *political* behavior, there have been fewer studies on their *military* behavior.⁶ However, military capabilities have gained some traction among researchers in relation to sustained civil wars and multinational missions in recent years.⁷ Within the wide

¹ Jonathan M Powell and Clayton L. Thyne, "Global Instances of Coups from 1950 to 2010: A New Dataset," *Journal of Peace Research* 48, no. 2 (2011): 249-259.

² There have been at least 88 successful coups on the continent between 1952 and 2012. Issaka K Souaré, "The African Union as a norm entrepreneur on military coups d'état in African (1952-2012): an empirical assessment," *The Journal Of Modern African Studies* 52, no. 1 (March 2014): 60-94.

³ Some examples include W.F. Gutteridge, *Military Regimes in Africa* (Suffolk: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1975); Samuel Decalo, *Coups and Army Rule in Africa: Studies in Military Style* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

⁴ Paul Nugent, *Africa Since Independence* 2nd Ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 261-263.

⁵ Some examples include Claude E. Welch, "Military Disengagement from Politics: Lessons from West Africa," *Armed Forces & Society* 9, 4 (Summer 1983): 541-554; George Klay Kieh, Jr. and Pita Ogaba Agbese, eds. *The Military and Politics in Africa: From Engagement to Democratic and Constitutional Control* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004).

⁶ Herbert M. Howe, *Ambiguous Order: Military Forces in African States* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2001): 2.

⁷ For example, there have been in-depth studies of military performance at the tactical and operational level for peacekeeping missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, such as Funmi Olonisakin, *Peacekeeping in Sierra Leone: The Story of UNAMSIL* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2008).

range of studies of military activities in Africa, which span numerous disciplines, military mutinies have been consistently neglected.

Mutinies are by no means an innovation among soldiers and therefore the lack of attention cannot be attributed to novelty. Mark Weitz argues that “mutiny is as old as soldiering,” with the first recorded case of mutiny occurring amongst Roman troops in the first century CE.⁸ Yet neither is the tactic outdated. As Raymond Callahan explains, mutinies are “one of the constants in the history of military organizations.”⁹ One needs only to look back over the last couple years in West Africa to support the idea that mutinies are an “unfailing timely topic” within military studies.¹⁰

However despite their persistence throughout history, mutinies are a topic that military personnel, particularly officers, are not keen to discuss. Military historian Richard Watt dramatically portrays this when he explained that “a mutiny is like a horrible, malignant disease and the chances that the patient will die an agonizing death are so great, that the subject cannot be mentioned aloud.”¹¹ Rather than declare the dreaded word, military commanders use a variety of other terms to describe the act. For example, militaries often instead refer to the action as an “incident,” “strike,” “protest,” “disaffection,” or in a recent case amongst American soldiers in Iraq, a “temporary breakdown in discipline.”¹² Although commanders are uneasy with the topic, there is also an ongoing intrigue with mutinies that extends beyond just military historians and has inspired numerous fictional novels as well as classic Hollywood films such as *Mutiny on the Bounty* and *The Caine Mutiny*. Jane Hathaway explains the dual fascination and fear that surrounds mutinies by stating “mutiny is surely one of the most terrifying, yet fascinating, forms of rebellion since

⁸ Mark Weitz, “Desertion as Mutiny: Upcountry Georgians in the Army of Tennessee,” in *Rebellion, Repression, Reinvention: Mutiny in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Jane Hathaway (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2001): 3.

⁹ Raymond Callahan, “The Indian Army, Total War and the Dog that Didn’t Bark in the Night,” *Rebellion, Repression, Reinvention: Mutiny in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Jane Hathaway (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2001): 119.

¹⁰ Jane Hathaway, “Introduction” in *Rebellion, Repression, Reinvention: Mutiny in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Jane Hathaway (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2001), XI.

¹¹ Richard Watt, *Dare Call it Treason* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963): 155-156 in Elihu Rose, “The Anatomy of Mutiny,” *Armed Forces and Society*, 8 No. 4 (Summer 1982): 561.

¹² Elihu Rose, “The Anatomy of Mutiny,” *Armed Forces and Society*, 8 No. 4 (Summer 1982): 568; latter quote from Julie Rawe, Christopher Allbritton, Alice Jackson Baughn, and Constance E. Richards, “Mutiny on the Convoy?” *Time Magazine*, October 25, 2004, accessed September 10, 2013, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,995475,00.html>

it erupts within the very military institutions that are supposed to ensure a society's order and security."¹³

Given the long history of mutinies, the concern they raise among the military, and the popular interest they inspire, it is surprising that there is limited academic work on the topic. Howard Coombs notes the deficit by stating, "rigorous study of military protest is long overdue."¹⁴ Similarly Hathaway explains that "scholarship on mutiny is so underdeveloped that a synthetic treatment of the topic, giving due weight to the many possible meanings and manifestations of mutiny, is not yet conceivable."¹⁵ Existing literature on mutinies is dominated by individual case studies, with few studies that look at mutinies as an ongoing phenomenon.

The "first book to take up mutiny as a topic of comparative inquiry" was published as recently as 2001.¹⁶ While this work significantly adds to the understanding of mutiny as a military tactic, it also admittedly lacks attention to African mutinies. The editor explains that the one "regret" of the edition "is the absence of chapters treating mutinies in Africa."¹⁷ She goes on to state "One can only hope [that other volumes will] give due space to mutinies in various African societies."¹⁸ However, this hope has not come to fruition and there remain few studies focused on African mutinies, especially in a post-colonial context.

The general neglect of research on African mutinies does not represent a lack of mutinies on the continent. Colonial powers were challenged by mutinies within the Gold Coast Artillery Corps in 1858 and 1863, Sudanese troops in 1897-1898, the Royal Niger Constabulary in 1898, the Sierra Leone Frontier Force in 1900, and the West African Regiment in 1901.¹⁹ There were also mutinies leading up to the end of

¹³ Hathaway, "Introduction" in *Rebellion, Repression, Reinvention: Mutiny in Comparative Perspective*, XI.

¹⁴ Howard G. Coombs, "Introduction" in *The Insubordinate and the Noncompliant: Case Studies of Canadian Mutiny and Disobedience, 1920 to Present*, ed. Howard G Coombs (Ontario, Canada: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007), 16.

¹⁵ Hathaway, "Introduction" in *Rebellion, Repression, Reinvention: Mutiny in Comparative Perspective*, XII.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, XI.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, XVII.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Festus B. Aboagye, *The Ghana Army: A Concise Contemporary Guide to its Centennial Regimental History, 1897-1999* (Accra: Sedco Publishing Limited, 1999): 95-96; David Killingray, "The Mutiny of the West African Regiment in the Gold Coast, 1901," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 16, no. 3(1983): 443.

the colonial period as well as during World War II.²⁰ In 1944 soldiers in Belgian Congo plotted an unsuccessful mutiny against low pay and poor health conditions and later carried through with an uprising opposing mandatory smallpox vaccinations.²¹ The same year Senegalese soldiers mutinied in Dakar to demand back wages, better food and housing.²² This mutiny, and subsequent massacre of many of the mutineers, is depicted in the movie *Camp de Thiaroye* (1988), directed by Ousmane Sembene. The Somali Camel Corps was particularly known for their rebellious behaviour and conducted mutinies over pay and conditions in 1937 and 1944.²³ In assessing a number of these mutinies, John Iliffe notes, "African colonial troops used mutiny both as collective bargaining and to defend their honour."²⁴ My analysis of post-colonial mutinies will demonstrate that modern mutinies in Africa have similar aims.

African mutinies gained some popular and academic attention in the early 1960s when a series of mutinies followed quickly after independence. Congolese soldiers wasted little time in initiating their first post-colonial mutiny just days after the country gained independence.²⁵ Soldiers in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda also orchestrated mutinies soon after independence.²⁶ A series of mutinies, spread over several months, which preceded the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution have also received academic attention.²⁷ However, beyond these examples there are a limited number of studies of mutinies in recent decades in Africa, perhaps giving the impression that mutinies have decreased since the 1960s and 1970s. My research shows that mutinies have neither decreased since the early independence years nor is there an end in sight to the tactic. However, there have been changes in the tactics used in mutinies over the last several decades, particularly the increased use of media by mutineers, which Chapter Two will examine. Additionally, mutinies continue to

²⁰ Timothy H. Parsons, *The 1964 Army Mutinies and the Making of Modern East Africa* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003): 13.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Jama Mohamed, "The 1937 Somaliland Camel Corps Mutiny: A Contrapuntal Reading," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 33, no. 3 (2000): 100.

²⁴ John Iliffe, *Honour in African History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 241.

²⁵ Catherine Hoskyns, *The Congo Since Independence: January 1960-December 1961* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

²⁶ Parsons, *The 1964 Army Mutinies and the Making of Modern East Africa*.

²⁷ Gebru Tareke, *The Ethiopia Revolution: War in the Horn of Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009): 34-44; Robin Luckham, "Radical Soldiers, New Model Armies and Nation-State in Ethiopia and Eritrea" in *Political Armies: The Military and National Building in the Age of Democracy*, eds. Kees Koonings and Dirk Kruijt (London: Zed Books, 2002): 238-266.

have major consequences for African states. For example, mutinies in Burkina Faso in 2011 led to the largest government changes in President Compaoré's twenty-five year reign and a mutiny in Mali in 2012 preceded a coup which ended over two decades of democratic transitions of power.

1.2 Research Questions and Contributions

Mutinying is exceptional behaviour with potentially severe consequences for individuals, militaries, and states. The act is universally illegal, often carrying a potential sentence of capital punishment for the mutineers, making it a highly risky decision for soldiers. My research examines when and why soldiers in West and Central Africa decide to make the risky choice to mutiny and how they typically carry out the act. These questions are intentionally broad, partially due to the lack of research on the topic, particularly in an African context. There is no existing published dataset to provide the most basic information about mutinies in Africa, such as how many have occurred, what the soldiers commonly demand and what tactics they use to make their demands. While the lack of existing data and research on African mutinies was often challenging, it also allowed for the opportunity to explore broader themes which have not yet been examined in other research.

When I began the research I had an initial hypothesis that mutinies would follow patterns; however I had few ideas of what those patterns would be. My goal was to collect original data on mutinies, both through a dataset covering a large time frame and geographic region as well as through several case studies in order to look for trends within the data. I was specifically looking for trends in when soldiers mutiny and how they mutiny in order to provide new insight into why soldiers choose this tactic. Many of the patterns that I observed after data collection surprised me and led me into fields I had not intended to focus on from the start. For example, the trends I observed within my mutiny dataset caused me to further examine mutinies in relation to peacekeeping and democracy (the themes of Chapters Three and Four).

My research provides a new look at ways in which primarily rank and file soldiers express their discontent within a military structure. This view from the lower ranks is one that has been neglected within research but is key to

comprehending how militaries function, and particularly in understanding internal struggles which can threaten their ability to function effectively.²⁸ My research is original because it examines mutinies as a recurring phenomenon in West and Central Africa, rather than the more common approach of viewing them as singular, exceptional events. I suggest that there are common situations and problems within military organizations that heighten the chance of mutinies throughout the region. Understanding common triggers to mutinies is the first step to developing ways to reduce them, a goal that governments, military leaders, and even rank and file soldiers would likely support.

1.3 A Revised View of Mutinies

This thesis has two overarching themes. The first is that mutineers are usually driven by a combination of material demands and shared values concerning perceived injustice. Mutinies therefore usually represent much larger issues than the initial demands suggest and regularly have larger impacts than the immediate mutiny. Secondly, soldiers use mutinies to communicate with senior leadership. Through the mutiny they attempt to open a dialogue with their hierarchy and vocalize their expectations. Together these themes challenge the standard way in which mutinies are often viewed, either as pay disputes or acts of indiscipline. Instead, I argue that they should more accurately be viewed as soldiers communicating deeper perceptions of tensions and injustices within a military environment.

These themes have similarities with observations found in studies of mutinies in regions outside of Africa in both historical and more modern times. This section will situate these themes in wider research on mutinies. As previously mentioned, there is limited research on African mutinies and thus most of this review of literature will involve research from a non-African context. The overlap between the themes of my research on modern African mutinies and others' research on (mostly)

²⁸ Eboe Hutchful and Abdoulaye Bathily, "Introduction," in *The Military and Militarism in Africa*, eds. Eboe Hutchful and Abdoulaye Bathily (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1998): VI; Robin Luckham, "The Military, Militarisation and Democratisation in Africa: A Survey of Literature and Issues," in *The Military and Militarism in Africa*, eds. Eboe Hutchful and Abdoulaye Bathily (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1998): 22-23.

Western mutinies from a historic context suggest that there are some universal traits to mutinies. However, section 1.6 will also show that there are significant differences, particularly in when and how soldiers in West and Central Africa mutiny.

Despite the widely different context in which mutinies have occurred over time, they share a universal trait of challenging authority and this makes them universally feared by military commanders. Militaries are founded on a system of discipline, which is based on strict hierarchy.²⁹ Within any military hierarchy there are two distinct sectors: enlisted soldiers and officers.³⁰ The enlisted ranks make up a bulk of the personnel in nearly all militaries and there are few opportunities for enlisted ranks to move into the officer corps.³¹ The enlisted ranks serve as the “physical production of force,” while officers are responsible for the directive function.³² In the words of Samuel Huntington, the enlisted specialize in the application of violence, while the officers are the managers of violence.³³ Enlisted ranks are always subordinate to the officer corps and required to show obedience to their superiors.

When soldiers mutiny they challenge their superiors and directly contradict the foundation of a military structure. As Elihu Rose explains, a mutiny “is more than a breach of regulations; it is a negation of the military essence.”³⁴ He argues mutinies are “the antithesis of discipline”, and therefore they are detested by militaries universally. However, this thesis will challenge the idea of mutiny as the “antithesis of discipline” and show that there is often a level of discipline within mutinies. Additionally, mutinies should not be seen as an attack on the hierarchy but

²⁹ Rose, “The Anatomy of Mutiny,” 562.

³⁰ This system is universally used in militaries; however the terminology can vary by country (and even vary within different branches in the same country). The terms “ranks,” “other ranks,” and “rank and file” all refer to enlisted soldiers, while “officers” refers to commissioned officers, which make up the officer corps. For those unfamiliar with military hierarchies, confusion may come about with the term “non-commissioned officers” (NCOs). These are the top levels of the enlisted ranks but they are not part of the officer corps and are always subordinate to commissioned officers.

³¹ Guinea Bissau is one exception as they currently have more officers than enlisted ranks. However, this is highly unusual. Birgit Embaló, “Civil-military relations and political order in Guinea-Bissau,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 50, no. 2 (June 2012): 257.

³² Eboe Hutchful, “Institutional Decomposition and Junior Ranks’ Political Action in Ghana,” in *The Military and Militarism in Africa*, eds. Eboe Hutchful and Abdoulaye Bathily (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1998): 248.

³³ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957): 18.

³⁴ Rose, “The Anatomy of Mutiny,” 562-563.

an objection to particular individuals or behaviours within that hierarchy. This is consistent with research on other African mutinies. For example, Nestor Luanda found that during the Tanganyika mutinies in 1964 there were “continual efforts of the mutineers to recreate (rather than destroy) hierarchy.”³⁵

Generally, mutinies are viewed by military authorities and non-specialists as being primarily sparked by mundane material issues such as pay, living conditions, and food. The grievances are regularly seen as “basic and immediate.”³⁶ Although material grievances may be easy to understand, recent scholarship on mutinies from a worldwide perspective has at times criticized both military commanders and the more classic academic studies of mutinies for an over-emphasis on the material grievances, which paint a deceptively simple explanation of mutiny. Focusing too heavily on such grievances is unhelpful in assessing how or when soldiers decide to mutiny. Christopher Ankersen questions at what point “things get bad enough” for soldiers to decide to mutiny.³⁷ This is a particularly relevant question for West and Central African militaries because there are ample opportunities for grievances among rank and file soldiers in most states in the region. At any given time, soldiers in the region could find fault with their uniforms, equipment, housing, food, or salaries. Still, we do not see rank and file soldiers in Africa in constant revolt, nor are mutinies limited to times of extreme hardship, suggesting that there are other aspects beyond material conditions that contribute to the decision to mutiny.

Ankersen argues that one reason why the material school of thought has long been dominant is that rank and file soldiers have historically been less educated and from lower-socioeconomic classes and often treated as unsophisticated, both within academia and military organizations. Therefore, when they mutiny it is also viewed as an unsophisticated, instantaneous reaction, rather than a planned and logical protest.³⁸ This observation can be applied to an African context as well, where “the

³⁵ Nestor Luanda, “The Tanganyika Rifles and the Mutiny of January 1964,” in *The Military and Militarism in Africa*, Eboe Hutchful and Abdoulaye Bathily, eds. (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1998): 203.

³⁶ Geoffrey Parker, “Forward” in *Rebellion, Repression, Reinvention: Mutiny in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Jane Hathaway (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2001): viii.

³⁷ Christopher Ankersen, “Beyond Mutiny? – Instrumental and Expressive Understandings of Contemporary ‘Collective Indiscipline’” in *The Unwilling and the Reluctant: Theoretical Perspectives on Disobedience in the Military*, ed. Craig Leslie Mantle (Ontario, Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2006): 121.

³⁸ Ankersen, “Beyond Mutiny? – Instrumental and Expressive Understandings of Contemporary ‘Collective Indiscipline,’” 123.

ranks have remained invisible, in theory as well as in research.”³⁹ There has been little academic attention on the corporate claims and material conditions in the life of ordinary soldiers in Africa, perhaps suggesting a notion that their actions are not as worthy of the analysis that has been given to the officer corps.⁴⁰ The tendency to downplay or simplify actions by rank and file soldiers may help explain the lack of attention to mutinies within literature on African militaries.

Another cause for the heavy focus on material issues may be “institutional vanity.”⁴¹ Rose explains that mutinies are “antithetical to an ethos whose fundamental tenets are duty, loyalty, honour, and patriotism, and the unit that participates in a mutiny brings discredit upon itself, its officers, and its service.”⁴² It is therefore more convenient for military leadership to make claims that mutineers are primarily material-driven than to address issues that may bring dishonour to the organization, particularly the officer corps, and thus undermine its key tenets.

Regardless of why there is a preference to focus on material aspects of mutinies, there is a consensus among many who have recently written about mutinies that we must look beyond “the mundane material grievances that have become cliché” in order to discover the less tangible motivations.⁴³ In Rose’s “categories of discontent” he describes these non-material grievances as issues of legitimacy, which “stems from the belief by the troops that an aspect of their service is unacceptable for ethical, moral, intellectual, or political reasons.”⁴⁴ Ankersen labels them as ‘existential issues,’ which he defines as the desire of soldiers to feel that they are valued and not being taken for granted.⁴⁵ Like these authors, I also believe that soldiers are usually motivated to mutiny by values concerning what they believe is unfair treatment and irresponsible behaviour by superiors within a military context.⁴⁶ The case studies in particular will provide details to these feelings of injustice, which are often not clearly portrayed in media reporting of the events.

³⁹ Hutchful and Bathily, “Introduction,” *The Military and Militarism in Africa*, VI.

⁴⁰ Luckham, “The Military, Militarisation and Democratisation in Africa: A Survey of Literature and Issues,” 22-23.

⁴¹ Ankersen, “Beyond Mutiny? – Instrumental and Expressive Understandings of Contemporary ‘Collective Indiscipline,’” 124.

⁴² Rose, “The Anatomy of Mutiny,” 563.

⁴³ Hathaway, “Introduction” in *Rebellion, Repression, Reinvention: Mutiny in Comparative Perspective*, XV.

⁴⁴ Rose, “The Anatomy of Mutiny,” 566.

⁴⁵ Ankersen, “Beyond Mutiny? – Instrumental and Expressive Understandings of Contemporary ‘Collective Indiscipline,’” 122.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Along the same lines of Ankersen's question about what makes material conditions "bad enough," one could also question when are perceptions of injustice "unacceptable enough" to trigger a mutiny? This is a complex question, with no singular answer. Just as mutinies do not only occur when salary payments are late, neither do they occur simply because officers suddenly begin to act poorly. My research suggests that by observing trends within the occurrence of mutinies, we can identify shifts in shared beliefs of what soldiers find acceptable as well as what they believe they are entitled to. Furthermore, I will demonstrate two situations in which the views of acceptable treatment by superiors among soldiers appears to shift at the same time that material grievances also increase, causing the perfect conditions for mutiny. This occurred in West and Central Africa during the democratization period of the 1990s. Chapter Three will argue that the democratization movement inspired an altered sense of expectations within the military which drew from many of the demands made by civilians at the time. Just as civilians were increasingly focused on issues of accountability among politicians, so too were soldiers towards their superiors. This occurred at a time in which economic constraints also led to increased economic hardships for the soldiers. The overlap between civilian and military demands is not limited to the 1990s and Chapter Seven will show a similar trend in recent mutinies in Burkina Faso. Chapter Four will demonstrate another pattern of altered expectations alongside increased hardships but this time as a result of deployment experiences. Amongst soldiers there appears to be a heightened sense of injustice surrounding a lack of pay for veterans than there is for soldiers who are stationed at home. In the case of deployments, the sense of injustice appears linked to perceptions of a broken contract.

This thesis will show that material grievances and perceptions of injustice are closely intertwined. For example, accusations made by rank and file soldiers over corruption by officers are also usually linked to suspicions that their payment delays are due to corrupt practices. Understanding that material grievances are often working in conjunction with feelings of injustice helps explain why mutineers' actions often appear disproportionately risky to their material demands. For example, Chapter Six will detail a mutiny in The Gambia over 15 days pay. The risk taken for a relatively small amount of money may seem illogical in a material sense but becomes more understandable when viewed as an attempt to alter the behaviour

of the hierarchy into a manner which they find acceptable and which could potentially have longer term benefits. These soldiers not only demanded their pay but also insisted that the officers who were responsible for the delay be held responsible.

Additionally, when mutinies are seen as more complex than requests for material demands, it becomes easier to see why they often have much larger consequences than the immediate mutiny. Addressing material complaints is a fairly easy task; however the deeper divisions of mistrust, suspicion, and disrespect that often accompany the mutiny are much harder to fix and can create long lasting divides within a military. The idea that even seemingly small mutinies can have great effects is a theme in my research that I share with other scholars studying mutinies. For example, Geoffrey Parker's work on mutinies within the Spanish army between 1572 and 1607 showed that even though the soldiers lacked political motivations, their actions had political significance.⁴⁷ Although looking at a very different case than Parker, Ali Mazrui and Donald Rothchild make a similar observation about the East African mutinies in 1964. They explain, "Army mutinies, even when concerned with pay, have an importance that extends beyond the mutinies themselves. They have repercussions which always exceed the intentions of the mutineers."⁴⁸ Similarly Rose, looking at mutinies from a broad perspective, states, "The military may regard mutiny as a purely internal matter but its effect can easily spill over the institutional boundaries and affect society at large."⁴⁹

The image of mutinies exposing deeper discontent is closely linked to the other key theme of my thesis- communication. When mutinies are viewed as demands for material items or as acts of indiscipline, the mutiny is "normally summarily addressed by the authorities with little introspection concerning the genesis of the event."⁵⁰ Instead I will argue that it is more valuable to view mutinies as a form of communication, in which mutineers are taking a great risk to convey a

⁴⁷ Geoffrey Parker, "Mutiny and Discontent in the Spanish Army of Flanders 1527-1607," *Past & Present*, no. 58 (Feb. 1973): 47.

⁴⁸ Ali A. Mazrui and Donald Rothchild, "The Soldier and the State in East Africa: Some Theoretical Conclusions on the Army Mutinies of 1964," *The Western Political Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (Mar 1967): 82.

⁴⁹ Rose, "The Anatomy of Mutiny," 572.

⁵⁰ Howard G. Coombs, "Dimensions of Military Leadership: The Kinmel Park Mutiny of 4-5 March 1919," in *The Apathetic and the Defiant: Case Studies of Canadian Mutiny and Disobedience, 1812 to 1919*, ed. Craig Leslie Mantle (Ontario: Canadian Defence Academy, 2007): 407.

message to their hierarchy. Military hierarchies intentionally stifle communication and direct it in a one-way manner down the chain of command, thus giving rank and file soldiers few means to communicate their grievances to higher authority, especially if their grievances involve their immediate seniors. Mutinies are used by (mostly) junior soldiers, as a way to open a dialogue with senior leadership in an environment in which the voices of the lowest in the structure are often unheard.

My analysis of common tactics amongst African mutineers will show that the main purpose of their actions is to draw attention and communicate a message. While some of the more recent studies also note that mutinies “can be visualized as a form of communication through collective action,” it is not the dominant way of thinking about mutinies, especially amongst military personnel. For example, in an official investigation into one of the only notable mutinies among the British Royal Navy during World War II, there seems to be surprise in the report which states “no particular precautions were taken to keep this meeting [about common grievances] secret” and suggests that “the men in fact wanted it to be discovered.”⁵¹ My research suggests that it is not uncommon for soldiers to openly discuss complaints and the idea of mutiny. This is understandable if one views mutiny as a mode of communication in which the function is to convey a message, not keep it a secret. Additionally, there is an element of bluff in the pre-warnings mutineers often give as soldiers seem to hope even the hint of a mutiny will be enough to bring attention to their grievances (and examples throughout this thesis will show that it often works).

I will focus particularly on how mutineers utilize the media as a mode of communication, an aspect that is changing quickly with new forms of media and one that has been neglected in other research on mutinies. The thesis will look both at mutinies as a form of communication and how soldiers communicate their grievances during the mutiny. It will show that the messages portrayed both by the mutineers themselves and through the act of mutinying allow for a unique glimpse into the tensions within the military, which are often hidden internally by strict hierarchy and externally by a military culture of exclusivity.

⁵¹ Christopher Bell, “Mutiny and the Royal Canadian Navy” in *The Unwilling and the Reluctant: Theoretical Perspectives on Disobedience in the Military*, ed. Craig Leslie Mantle (Ontario, Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2006): 97.

1.4 Identifying Mutiny

Scholars who write about mutinies share a common frustration with defining the term. On one end of the spectrum are authors like Craig Mantle, whose edited volume simply states that “unlike nearly every other work on the subject, this volume will neither argue about nor dwell on the definitions” instead leaving the term open to a wide variety of actions.⁵² On the other end is Christopher Bell, who not only defines mutinies but also creates sub-categories of various different kinds of mutinies (minor, major, seizure of power, and secession).⁵³ However, most authors fall somewhere in between, by providing a definition but also noting that exceptions to the definition are likely. For example, Hathaway explains that the “ambiguous” meaning of the term was an obstacle to their edited volume and as a result “Part I” of the book is titled “Problems in Defining Mutiny.”⁵⁴ Elihu Rose and Timothy Parsons both devote attention to debating the topic in their writings, while others such as Joel Hamby prefer to quote directly from military codes of conduct of given countries. The debate around the definition of mutiny centres on its vagueness. Dean Black explains that mutiny is “the accepted legal term for almost every refusal to obey orders.”⁵⁵ Therefore, vastly different actions can fall into the category of mutiny.

While scholars often disagree about the particulars of what constitutes a mutiny, Rose’s definition, based on its first use in 16th century France, seems to be generally accepted as a starting point for classifying mutiny. He defines a mutiny as “an act of collective insubordination, in which troops revolt against lawfully constituted authority.”⁵⁶ There are several key aspects to this definition. One is the word ‘collective,’ which shows that a mutiny must involve a group of soldiers. A single individual who refuses orders is guilty of insubordination but a group who acts together can be charged with mutiny. Additionally, the definition indicates that mutinies involve soldiers who are currently a part of the state’s security structure

⁵² Craig Leslie Mantle, “Introduction” in *The Unwilling and the Reluctant: Theoretical Perspectives on Disobedience in the Military*, ed. Craig Leslie Mantle (Ontario, Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2006): 3.

⁵³ Christopher Bell, “Mutiny and the Royal Canadian Navy,” 88.

⁵⁴ Hathaway, “Introduction” in *Rebellion, Repression, Reinvention: Mutiny in Comparative Perspective*, XII.

⁵⁵ Dean C. Black, “Murder by Spitfire? Probing for Mutiny and Indiscipline in Canada’s Second World War Air Force,” in *The Insubordinate and the Noncompliant: Case Studies of Canadian Mutiny and Disobedience, 1920 to Present*, ed. Howard G. Coombs (Ontario, Canada: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007): 146.

⁵⁶ Rose, “The Anatomy of Mutiny,” 561.

revolting against their legitimate authority figures who are also part of the structure. This is important because it helps distinguish a mutiny from a rebellion, in which the aggressors may be targeting official authorities but doing so from the outside. The fact that mutineers are still employed by the military, and generally want to keep that status, is an important trait that guides their tactics.

My study will add to Rose's definition and identify mutinies as an act of collective insubordination, in which troops revolt against lawfully constituted authority in order to express primary grievances other than the desire for political power. While the term 'mutiny' generally implies an expression of corporate grievances, not the desire for direct political power I felt it necessary to explicitly add this to the definition due to the prevalence of coups in the region I am studying. This addition helps differentiate mutinies from coups, a topic I will further elaborate on in the following section. It is possible to argue that my definition creates an artificial divide between mutinies and coups. However, to make sure that I am not reclassifying and reanalyzing coups or coup attempts as mutinies I have compared my own dataset to Patrick McGowan's dataset on coups and coup attempts, which shows a minimal number of overlapping cases. This data will be presented in more detail in section 1.9.4 of this chapter.

1.5 Differentiating Coups and Mutinies

The lack of academic research on African mutinies stands in stark contrast to extensive research on African coups d'état. Mutinies have received some attention among coup theorists; however, they are often only mentioned in their relation to coups. For example, Ruth First classified mutinies as the initial stage of a coup cycle and Robin Luckham explains that mutinies have been the first phase in the military's incursions into politics in Africa.⁵⁷ Media reports are unhelpful in differentiating the two events, often claiming mutinies are coup attempts, even when there is little evidence of desire for political control. While there are certainly cases in which a mutiny can escalate to a political overthrow, my research will demonstrate that most

⁵⁷ Ruth First, *The Barrel of a Gun: Political Power in Africa and the Coup d'Etat* (London: Penguin Press, 1970): 205; Luckham, "The Military, Militarisation and Democratisation in Africa: A Survey of Literature and Issues," 23-24.

mutinies do not lead to coups or coup attempts. An underlying argument of my research is that mutinies and coups are inherently different events and thus coup research and theories are limited in their applicability to mutinies. While coup leaders and mutineers may have similar grievances, for example lack of promotion opportunities, the manner in which they attempt to address their grievances is very different, as further explained below.

The most basic distinction between mutinies and coups is found in the definitions of the two events. A coup is defined as

events in which existing regimes are suddenly and illegally displaced by the action of relatively small groups in which members of the military, police, or security forces of the state play a key role, either on their own or in conjunction with a number of civil servants or politicians.⁵⁸

While definitions of mutinies vary, they never stipulate that mutinies require the removal of a regime.

The differences go beyond just the definition to include variations in participants, tactics, and goals. Although both coups and mutinies involve the military, they typically originate from different sectors of the military. Coups generally originate from the officer ranks while mutinies usually include mostly rank and file soldiers.⁵⁹ Craig Jenkins and Augustine Kposowa explain, "the major architects of African coups have been those with significant power, not [those] on the periphery of the system."⁶⁰ By contrast, mutinies in Africa are almost the complete opposite. They originate at the periphery and typically focus their grievances against those with significant power. Even in cases where officers have been involved in the mutiny, they are generally officers who lack close links to the ruling political structures. Chapter Five will show an example of this through the case study of Sierra Leone.

⁵⁸ Patrick J. McGowan, "African Military coups d'etat, 1956-2001: Frequency, Trends and Distribution." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 41, no. 3 (2003): 343.

⁵⁹ Jimmy Kandeh, *Coups From Below: Armed Subalterns and State Power in West Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004): 43; There is some flexibility in this pattern, as senior enlisted soldiers and junior officers at times participate in both coups and mutinies. However it is safe to say that junior enlisted would be unlikely to orchestrate a coup just as senior officers rarely start a mutiny.

⁶⁰ Craig J. Jenkins and Augustine J Kposowa. "Political Origins of African Military Coups: Ethnic Competition, Military Centrality, and Struggle over the Postcolonial State." *International Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (1992): 290.

In addition to the particular actors, the number of participants varies between the two events. A coup typically includes very few individuals, at least in the planning phases.⁶¹ Coups are intended to be exclusive and secretive.⁶² In a coup “the conspiratorial strike is the secret to its success, not the mobilization of popular masses.”⁶³ Mutinies are exactly the reverse. Mutineers want to include many participants and are generally seen to gain strength with increased numbers. Mutinies risk failure without many participants; coups risk failure with too many participants.

Since a coup can be conducted with very few individuals, the act itself does not require any approval beyond those involved. A mutiny must draw a larger number of participants and therefore the grievance must have some level of popular appeal amongst their peers. This is a significant difference between a coup and a mutiny because it also relates to the motive. A coup can be conducted for individual personal greed and power.⁶⁴ A small group of individuals can be the sole beneficiaries of a coup. A mutiny must appeal to the larger mass and its goals must benefit a wider group. This is not to imply that mutinies cannot involve greed as well. However, a mutiny is more likely to be initiated over a communal grievance.

As previously mentioned, there are different goals when soldiers conduct a coup compared to when they conduct a mutiny. The former want political control, while the latter want a specific grievance addressed. Coups can be seen as an ‘all or nothing’ scenario in which they strive to take complete political control. Mutinies want their grievances addressed and their conditions improved but are usually more flexible in how their concerns are addressed. As will be explained throughout this thesis in greater detail, the tactics used by mutineers are designed to extract concessions or negotiations and are thus different from the zero-sum mentality of soldiers that attempt coups. The flexibility of mutinies and their longer timeframe often makes them less unpredictable during the execution phase than coups. The goals of mutineers are often more vague and shift over time and the size of the group can change as other units join. Their tactics also shift, usually escalating the level of violence and threats.

⁶¹ Edward Luttwak, *Coup d'Etat: A Practical Handbook* (London: Penguin Press, 1968): 24.

⁶² Kandeh, *Coups From Below: Armed Subalterns and State Power in West Africa*, 43.

⁶³ First, *The Barrel of a Gun: Political Power in Africa and the Coup d'Etat*, 19.

⁶⁴ Decalo, *Coups and Army Rule in Africa: Studies in Military Style*, 20-21.

While differentiating coups from mutinies, my research will also show that in practice the two events are often interrelated.⁶⁵ I agree with Parsons' explanation that there is a "broad continuum of indiscipline in the military...One form can lead to another, or each type of indiscipline can remain a separate and discreet incident."⁶⁶ Mutinies can escalate to a coup when soldiers' demands are not met or when a zealous member decides to take control. Alternatively, a series of mutinies can lead to a "creeping coup," as was the case in Ethiopia in 1974.⁶⁷ This gray area between coups and mutinies has led to a shorthand used by scholars who avoid categorizing the action by combining the terms, such as Luckham's description of events in Sierra Leone in 1968 as "the coup-mutiny" or Boubacar N'Diaye's identification of events in Guinea in 1996 as "mutiny/coup."⁶⁸ The case study of Sierra Leone, Chapter Five, will demonstrate the blurred lines between the two events.

I will refer to aspects of coup theories throughout the thesis to highlight similarities or differences in my observations of mutinies. Additionally, coup research has helped guide the scope of my research, as will be described in the section 1.7. However, I argue that mutinies deserve detailed scholarly work, which treats these incidents as distinct from coups. Examining mutinies as a separate phenomenon from coups, adds more depth to our understanding of this continuum of indiscipline and a more nuanced understanding of the various ways African militaries make demands and challenge authority.

1.6 Unique Aspects of Modern African Mutinies

My observations while studying African mutinies and the observations of others working on non-African cases have similarities in relation to the function of mutinies within a military context and their potential impact. However, other

⁶⁵ Kandeh, *Coups From Below: Armed Subalterns and State Power in West Africa*, 40; Luckham, "The Military, Militarisation and Democratisation in Africa: A Survey of Literature and Issues," 17; Parsons, *The 1964 Army Mutinies and the Making of Modern East Africa*, 5.

⁶⁶ Parsons, *The 1964 Army Mutinies and the Making of Modern East Africa*, 5.

⁶⁷ Robin Luckham, "Radical Soldiers, New Model Armies and Nation-State in Ethiopia and Eritrea," 243.

⁶⁸ Luckham, "The Military, Militarisation and Democratisation in Africa: A Survey of Literature and Issues," 23; Boubacar N'Diaye "Guinea" in *Challenges of Security Sector Governance in West Africa*, eds. Alan Bryden, Boubacar N'Diaye, and Funmi Olonisakin (Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2008): 143.

existing studies are much less useful in attempting to understand when and how soldiers in West and Central Africa mutiny. The few case studies of African mutinies are simply too limited to provide a broader assessment and non-African studies are actually misleading when applied to an African context. Below I will examine several of the key differences between observations I have made about African mutinies and those made in other studies of non-African cases. By doing so the need for studies specifically pertaining to African mutinies becomes clear, as the existing mutiny literature is often limited in its applicability to an African context.

One difference is that much of the analysis of Western mutinies is specific to combat scenarios, particularly when soldiers refuse orders during a combat situation. Parsons explains “most cases of collective indiscipline in Western national armies occurred when danger of active combat broke down institutional prohibitions on insubordination and mutiny.”⁶⁹ Hamby shares this belief and created a “mutiny wagon wheel” which details what he feels are the eight reasons for mutinies. However his analysis is specific to “troops who are about to enter or actually engaged in fighting.”⁷⁰ The vast majority of mutinies in my dataset do not occur within a combat setting. It is possible that combat mutinies occur in the region, however the types of records available from Western conventional warfare are typically not available for modern African combat scenarios.

The focus on combat mutinies within other scholarship could give the impression that mutinies are largely confined to times of war. It is important to point out that in Africa this is not the case. Mutinies are a relevant topic in West and Central Africa regardless of whether the country is at war or peace. Some of the logic between causes of mutinies in combat settings can be applied to mutinies in non-combat. However, explanations that mutinies are largely a result of the battlefield conditions (such as fear, mental fatigue, sleep deprivation, etc.) are not as convincing in the mutinies examined in this thesis. Lawrence James links the prevalence of mutinies in world wars to the frequent use of conscripts who often had low morale due to the feelings of being “dragooned into service.”⁷¹ This explanation

⁶⁹ Parsons, *The 1964 Army Mutinies and the Making of Modern East Africa*, 8.

⁷⁰ Joel Hamby, “The Mutiny Wagon Wheel: A Leadership Model for Mutiny in Combat,” *Armed Forces and Society* 28, no. 4 (Summer 2002): 576.

⁷¹ Lawrence James, *Mutiny in the British and Commonwealth Forces, 1797-1956* (London: Buchan & Enright Publishers: 1987): 12.

in a modern African context does not hold weight as most countries in the region do not have a shortage of military recruits and do not rely on conscription.

The focus on mutinies in times of war also portrays mutinies as spontaneous actions directly linked to immediate life-threatening combat scenarios. For example, in studies of Western historical mutinies by Geoffrey Parker and Guy Pedroncini, they each conclude that there were “few premeditated or purposeful acts of indiscipline. Instead most mutineers acted out of despair, fatigue, or momentary anger.”⁷² Conversely, in the mutinies that I analyzed, the acts were often premeditated with soldiers regularly warning leadership ahead of time of the possibility of mutiny. Chapter Two will demonstrate that the tactics used by mutineers indicate that they are not spur of the moment decisions, but rather planned actions with specific goals. This point will be furthered in Chapter Four, which shows that while mutinies correlate with peacekeeping missions, the mutineers most often revolt when they return home from the deployment, not while on the battlefield.

Additionally, studies of mutinies in a Western context are often associated with navies.⁷³ Naval mutinies are a particularly dramatic type of mutiny since the confined space and sea location put added pressure on commanders. The dataset in this thesis does include mutinies among navy personnel but none onboard ship. The prevalence of studies of mutinies onboard ships and combat mutinies show the image of mutinies generally contained within a military environment, usually not affecting civilians. However, this is another significant difference with modern African mutinies as they regularly occur in populated city centres and many have resulted in high civilian casualties. While mutinies have traditionally been seen as an internal military matter, my research argues that studying mutinies can further our understanding of the way internal military divisions can affect civilian populations. Additionally, Chapter Three will show that mutinies do not just affect civilian society but civilian society often influences soldiers’ decision to mutiny. Therefore, civilian society will play a larger role in my study of African mutinies than in many other studies of mutinies in a non-African context.

⁷² Parker, “Forward” in *Rebellion, Repression, Reinvention: Mutiny in Comparative Perspective*, viii.

⁷³ Hamby, “The Mutiny Wagon Wheel: A Leadership Model for Mutiny in Combat,” 596, Hathaway, “Introduction” in *Rebellion, Repression, Reinvention: Mutiny in Comparative Perspective*, XII, Cornelis J. Lammers, “Strikes and Mutinies: A Comparative Study of Organizational Conflicts between Rulers and the Ruled,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (Dec. 1969): 570.

1.7 Scope of the Research

The geographic scope of my research will be limited to West and Central African countries. Studies by McGowan and Johnson have shown West Africa to have the highest Total Military Intervention Scores, making it the region *par excellence* of the military coup d'état.⁷⁴ While mutinies are not necessarily included in these scores, coups indicate a level of military indiscipline and dissatisfaction, which are qualities also associated with mutinies. When doing preliminary data collection I noticed that Central Africa had a very high prevalence of mutinies, with several significant cases. For example, Democratic Republic of Congo had the first post-independence mutiny and Central African Republic holds the record for the longest mutiny in the region. Combining West and Central Africa allows for a wider dataset with a variety of colonial backgrounds. While I cannot quantify the number of mutinies in the other regions in Africa, from my data collection I am confident that West and Central Africa have the highest rate of mutinies on the continent. Lastly, many of the most recent military incursions in African politics have occurred in West and Central Africa (Guinea coup in 2008, Niger coup in 2010, Côte d'Ivoire election standoff in 2010, Burkina Faso mutinies in 2011, Mali coup in 2012, Guinea Bissau coup in 2012, Central African Republic coup in 2013), showing that military indiscipline is a timely topic for this region.

My dataset for this thesis includes the West African countries that are part of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Therefore I include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. In terms of Central Africa I include Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of Congo, and Sao Tome and Principe.

My research covers all branches of the armed forces including the gendarmerie. The role of the gendarmerie varies by country but in general they are

⁷⁴ McGowan, "African Military coups d'état, 1956-2001: Frequency, Trends and Distribution," 356; Pat McGowan and Thomas H. Johnson, "African Military Coups d'état and Underdevelopment: A Quantitative Historical Analysis," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 22, no. 4 (Dec. 1984): 649.

considered the policing force of the military. They are typically considered part of the armed forces, use a military rank structure and often fall under the control of the defence sector. I will not include police or paramilitary forces in my study, however police forces will be referred to throughout the research, particularly when they are assigned to counter a mutiny or when they conduct mutinies at the same time as the military.

1.8 Research Design

My research design takes two distinct but complementary approaches to examining mutinies. The first approach is a dataset that documents the occurrence of mutinies in West and Central Africa since independence. It uses mixed methodology to present both quantitative and qualitative data on mutinies. The second approach involves case studies of mutinies in three countries. The two-part research design allows for identification of broader patterns of mutinies across time while not neglecting the ground level perspective. Each approach on its own has potential weaknesses. The dataset identifies broad patterns but is less valuable for looking at the context of the mutiny, whereas the case studies are rich in context but alone difficult to make generalizations from. However, combining the two approaches allows for mutinies to be viewed as incidents that both follow general patterns but are also subject to nuance.

Since my research design takes two distinct approaches to the topic, this methodology section will address each approach individually. It will start with an explanation of how I developed the mutiny dataset and discuss complications with the data. I will present my basic quantitative findings and more detailed analysis of the trends will be expanded on in later chapters. The latter part of this section will address my reasons for choosing the case study mutinies and explain how the data was collected to build these case studies.

1.9 Mutiny Dataset

One of the largest challenges I encountered in analyzing patterns of mutinies is a lack of any numerical data on the incidents of mutiny. Despite the popularity within military studies for counting and calculating (whether it be number of troops, number of casualties, number of enemy tanks/missiles/planes, number of coups conducted), there are no existing counts, or even estimates, for mutinies. Therefore, I began my research by building such a dataset. This dataset is significant because it is the first attempt to document how many mutinies have occurred in an African region. However, it is more than a quantitative dataset, as each recorded incident of mutiny includes a corresponding qualitative description. This dataset will drive much of the analysis of how mutinies are typically conducted (Chapter Two) as well as when West and Central African soldiers most often mutiny (Chapters Three and Four). It will also help explain actions taken by mutineers in the case studies (Chapters Five to Seven) and show when those actions follow the pattern or veer from it.

1.9.1 Building the Dataset

The first step in building a dataset of mutinies is determining what criteria must be met to be considered a mutiny. In order for an event to be included in my dataset it must include the following traits: 1) a group of soldiers who remain within the state's military structure and 2) use mass insubordination to express stated grievances and goals beyond the desire for political power to higher political and military authorities. These two criteria are closely linked to the definition of mutiny presented earlier. A key trait of all the mutinies in my dataset is that soldiers expressed grievances to the government or military hierarchy with hopes that the government would respond in their favour. In other words, the first action was not to occupy State House.

The best source for incidents of mutinies would likely be a state's internal military records. However, those are typically not available to researchers nor would I have been able to access the records for all the countries in my dataset. Therefore, the next best option was to look for incidents of mutiny documented in the media. I did a systematic review of every issue of *Africa South of the Sahara*, *Africa Confidential*, *Africa Research Bulletin*, and *West Africa* to identify cases of mutinies from independence to present day. These sources were chosen as my primary starting point due to their consistent and quality reporting on the region. I also

utilized the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) Project dataset, which documents and maps acts of political violence in Africa from 1997 onwards. Once I had identified an incident of mutiny I was able to do a more targeted search for additional information about the event. Additional information about the mutinies came from academic writing, memoirs, other news outlets, declassified and leaked intelligence reports, and interviews conducted during field research.

Another important source of information was McGowan's dataset of coups, attempted coups, and coup plots. McGowan provided me with the extended unpublished version of his dataset, which documents coup-related events across the continent from 1957-2003. His dataset serves as the basis for many other studies of coups. Access to this dataset allowed me to compare the incidents of coups to mutinies, as described earlier. Additionally, McGowan's dataset inspired the way in which I built and organized my dataset. His documentation also relies on media reporting and for each incident he includes a summary of the event.

1.9.2 Analysis of the dataset

Like McGowan, I have gathered qualitative data on each incident in my dataset. This amounted to hundreds of pages of data about the mutinies. In order to organize this data and observe patterns I used the qualitative data analysis computer software, NVivo. Within NVivo I created labels for the aspects of mutinies I was interested in. For example, some of my codes include location, leadership, tactics, examples of violence, government response, and stated grievances. I then uploaded all the data I had collected and coded the documents with the labels I created. This is a time-intensive method as it requires the user to manually code all the material that is related to a specific label. However, it is valuable because it allowed me to focus on one particular aspect of mutinies across the dataset. For example, I can retrieve all information for 'tactics' across all incidents of mutinies and observe reoccurring tactics used by mutineers, or alternatively, observe unique tactics that were not common within other mutinies.

Using NVivo also allowed me to easily add and label new incidents of mutinies to the dataset and see how the new case compares with previously observed patterns. I can therefore continue to build the dataset as more mutinies occur or add

new labels if I identify different aspects that are worth examining. NVivo is largely a way to organize data and is limited by the data in the dataset and the labels assigned by the user. It is unlikely to uncover trends that were not labelled by the user and will not assist with missing data.

1.9.3 Dataset Limitations

There are several challenges to building a dataset of mutinies based on media reporting. The first involves the incentive for both governments and militaries to not publicize a mutiny. Mutinies often challenge the legitimacy of individual officers or the military command structure. There is also a common belief within the military that a mutiny is always the fault of the officer in charge of the particular unit.⁷⁵ This gives officers a motive to not announce when a mutiny occurs, particularly when mutineers are calling attention to misdeeds by their officers, such as accusations of corruption. Additionally, mutinies are a threat to public order and there are often fears that they could spread to other units, giving government officials incentive to not announce mutinies.

Unreported mutinies are especially likely when the government controls the media, the case for many African states at some point since independence. Additionally, the level of international reporting is not consistent across the large number of countries in this dataset. In particular, the sources used are largely Anglophone and likely to focus more attention and have more access to countries which are former British colonies. With the increase in internet reporting and social media, it has become easier to identify mutinies, particularly when conducted in a public location. Additionally, mutineers over the last two decades have increasingly used media as a 'weapon.' This issue will be discussed further in Chapters Two and Three.

Given the methodological issues presented above, my dataset of mutinies almost certainly does not include every incident of mutiny within West and Central Africa. Rather it can only account for those that are publicly documented, which is

⁷⁵ Rose, "The Anatomy of Mutiny," 572; Hamby, "The Mutiny Wagon Wheel: A Leadership Model for Mutiny in Combat," 593.

likely an underestimate of the real number of occurrences. This is the opposite problem to that faced by those attempting to document coup attempts or plots. There is often speculation that governments will announce false coup attempts or coup plots as a justification for arresting opposition figures or those deemed a threat to political leadership. I did not come across what appeared to be false reporting on mutinies. This is related to the various differences in coups and mutinies discussed earlier. Mutinies are generally not seen as immediate threats to political control and usually include many participants. Therefore there would be less incentive to frame individuals for mutinies and the size of mutinies would make doing so difficult. Datasets of coup attempts and plots are challenged by false reporting whereas my mutiny dataset is affected by a lack of reporting.

One other complication with creating a dataset of mutinies is determining how to count the mutinies. As will be described in the following chapter, mutinies often spread between units and geographic areas. Therefore it is common to see multiple units mutinying in different locations within the same country. I was in a dilemma over whether to count this as one mutiny or multiple mutinies. In this scenario I counted multiple units mutinying at the same time as a single incident, largely because reporting usually does not identify all of the various participating units. However, when there was a clear end to a mutiny or pause for negotiations followed by another revolt (usually from a new unit), this was counted as a separate mutiny. There are two sets of mutinies (Central African Republic in 1996-1997 and Burkina Faso in 2011) in which a series of mutinies lasted several months. In these cases I decided to break the mutinies into phases, based on when negotiations or concessions occurred. The way in which I counted mutinies led to a conservative estimate. If I had counted each individual unit as a separate mutiny, the numbers would have been much higher. The large variation in the ways in which incidents of mutinies could be calculated as well as the earlier addressed issue of underreporting, has led me to focus much more on the qualitative aspects of the dataset instead of attempting more quantitative analysis.

1.9.4 Dataset Summary

My dataset accounts for sixty-six mutinies in West and Central Africa between 1960-2012. Figure 1.1 shows a chronological list of the mutinies, organized by the country they occurred in and the year.

Figure 1.1

List of Mutinies in West and Central Africa from 1960-2012

Country	Year	Country	Year
Democratic Republic of Congo	1960	Guinea	1996
Ghana	1961	Republic of Congo	1997
Democratic Republic of Congo	1961	Republic of Congo	1997
Togo	1963	Burkina Faso	1997
Liberia	1963	Guinea Bissau	1998
Niger	1963	Niger	1998
Republic of Congo	1966	Côte d'Ivoire	1999
Democratic Republic of Congo	1966	Niger	1999
Nigeria	1966	Burkina Faso	1999
Democratic Republic of Congo	1967	Côte d'Ivoire	2000
Nigeria	1970	Côte d'Ivoire	2000
Benin	1972	Nigeria	2000
Sierra Leone	1982	Benin	2000
Burkina Faso	1983	Central African Republic	2001
Côte d'Ivoire	1990	Côte d'Ivoire	2002
Côte d'Ivoire	1990	Niger	2002
Chad	1991	Burkina Faso	2003
Gambia	1991	Côte d'Ivoire	2003
Democratic Republic of Congo	1991	Guinea Bissau	2004
Democratic Republic of Congo	1991	Burkina Faso	2006
Benin	1992	Burkina Faso	2007
Republic of Congo	1992	Guinea	2007
Gambia	1992	Guinea	2007
Niger	1992	Guinea	2008
Central African Republic	1993	Côte d'Ivoire	2008
Central African Republic	1993	Nigeria	2008
Democratic Republic of Congo	1993	Guinea	2009
Côte d'Ivoire	1993	Guinea	2011
Niger	1993	Burkina Faso	2011
Central African Republic	1996	Burkina Faso	2011
Central African Republic	1996	Burkina Faso	2011
Central African Republic	1996	Guinea Bissau	2011
Republic of Congo	1996	Mali	2012

The above information is easier to comprehend when presented in a graphic. Therefore Figure 1.2 divides the mutinies into decades. This chart clearly shows that mutinies have not occurred at an even pace across time. Chapter Three will propose reasons for why soldiers have been prone to mutiny during certain decades more than others. For comparative purposes this chart does not include the years 2010-2012, as it does not account for a full decade. However, it is important to note that mutinies have not ceased in the most recent years. The qualitative data that accompanies the above listed mutinies will be analyzed in depth in Chapter Two.

Figure 1.2

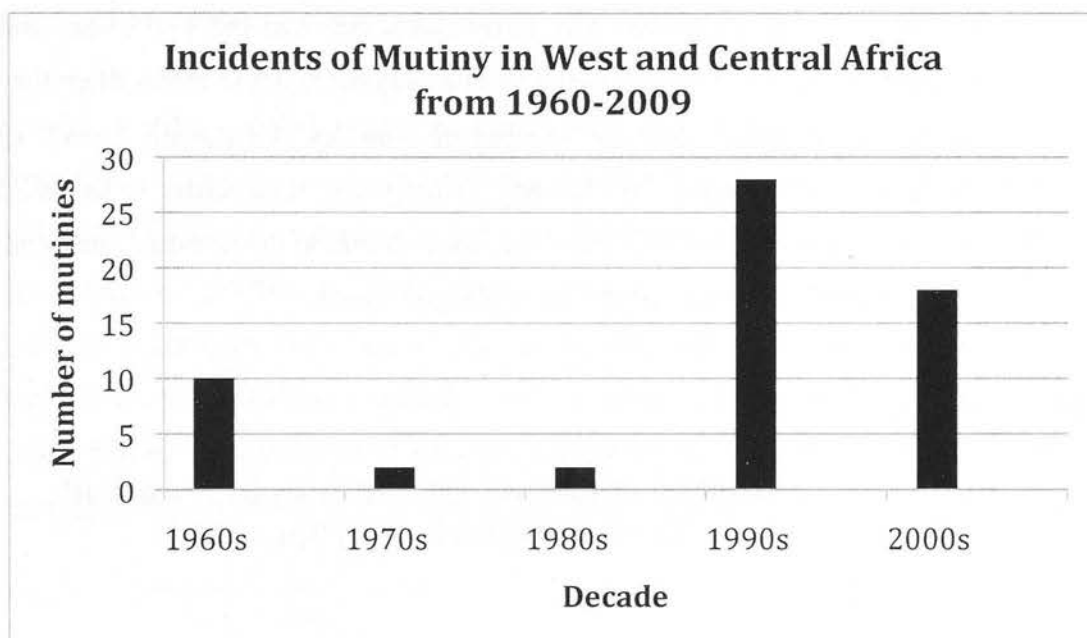
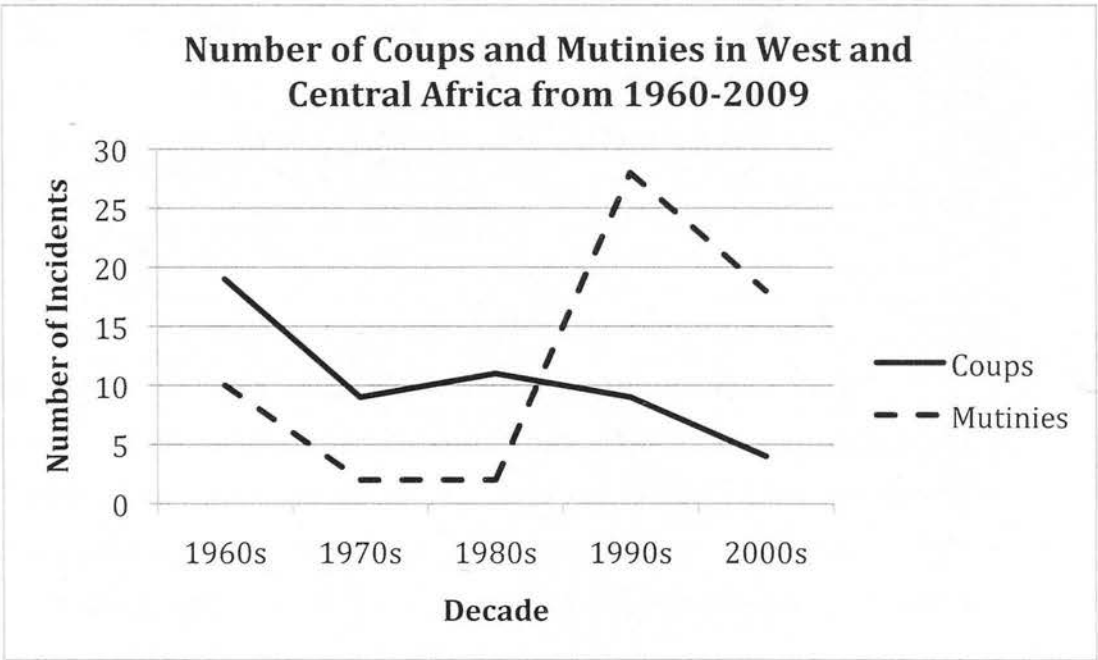


Figure 1.3 shows the occurrence of mutinies compared to coups, and returns to the discussion of the difference between the two events. In a direct comparison between my mutiny dataset and McGowan's coup and coup attempt dataset, there are eight incidents that are included in both his dataset and mine, which accounts for twelve percent of my dataset. In these eight individual cases, he classifies the event as failed coup attempts whereas I classify them as mutiny. In other words, he assesses that the soldiers were attempting to take the state while I believe their primary motive was to express grievances. This variation in interpretation of

motives occurs on the ground as well, with political and military leaders often assuming a mutiny is a coup attempt or less often, calling a coup attempt a mutiny. As the following chapter will further describe, large groups of soldiers can have different individual goals within a single group and thus in some cases it is possible to classify an incident as both a failed coup attempt and a mutiny. Comparing the two datasets also reveals that eighty-eight percent of the incidents in my dataset have not been included in coup datasets and strengthens the argument that mutinies are often a distinct type of rebellion that have been overlooked in other research.

In Figure 1.3 we can see that coups and mutinies follow a similar trajectory from the 1960s to the 1980s. The occurrence of coups and mutinies decrease from the 1960s to the 1970s and stay fairly stable between the 1970s and 1980s. The biggest difference in the use of the two tactics occurs in the 1990s when the numbers of coups decreases while the number of mutinies dramatically rises. Both then decrease into the twenty-first century. Additionally, in this chart we can see that from the 1990s onwards mutinies have been more common than coups. The trends seen in this chart will be further explained in Chapter Three.

Figure 1.3⁷⁶



⁷⁶ In this figure, the mutiny data is from my dataset (presented in Figure 1) and the coup data is from Patrick McGowan’s dataset. His dataset end in the year 2006 and I supplemented the years 2007-2009 with my own count of successful coups in the region.

1.10 Case Studies

The mutiny case studies will provide the in-depth details that the dataset lacks. As previously mentioned, reporting on mutinies typically simplifies what are complex events. The case studies will put the mutiny into historic and political context, which is key to a full understanding of how and why mutinies form. The case studies will also allow for post-mutiny analysis and help show that mutinies often have long lasting effects on a military and state.

In addition to providing a more detailed look at mutinies, the case studies provide a different and important perspective, that of the mutineers. In media reporting of mutinies, government representatives are typically the main source of information. When mutineers express their grievances it is usually through a spokesperson. Neither of these outlets allow for the perspective of individuals. Through interviews with former mutineers, the motivations and justification of individuals participating in mutinies will be given attention. While mutiny is an action that requires some group cohesion, conversations with former mutineers show that there is often variation in motives and beliefs amongst the individuals involved.

1.10.1 Choice of Case Studies

My case study countries are Sierra Leone, The Gambia, and Burkina Faso. These countries were chosen partially by a process of elimination. The internal workings of militaries are often shrouded in secrecy and exclusivity, making researching military misbehaviour a difficult task, even in stable countries. Most military records are not open to the public and military hierarchies often require numerous levels of authorization. West Africa has the added disadvantage of recurring instability, often caused by or involving a response from the military. Therefore, many of the countries most prone to mutinies, such as Central African Republic, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire, are the least desirable for field research.

Attempting field research in the midst of conflict or tensions within the state would put my informants and myself at a greater risk. Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, and The Gambia have all had a series of mutinies throughout their history but are also currently stable enough to effectively conduct field research on their militaries.

In addition to the accessibility of these cases, they also serve to show different 'types' of mutinies, which occurred under different styles of political leadership. The mutinies in The Gambia in 1991 and 1992 are what I term contained mutinies whereas the mutinies in Burkina Faso in 2011 are an example of violent mass mutinies. The case of Sierra Leone in 1992 represents the overlap between mutinies and coups and will show how one may lead to the other. At the time of the examined mutinies, Sierra Leone was under military leadership, The Gambia was led by a civilian who had been in office for twenty-four years, and Burkina Faso was (and still is) controlled by a long-standing military turned civilian leader. Lastly, the case studies show varying outcomes, often beyond the goals of the mutineers.

Despite many of the clear differences between the case studies, when looked at in detail, they also show similarities, particularly in the causes of the mutiny and the tactics used by the mutineers. These three case studies show that even when mutinies occur in very different settings with varied participants, there are common trends within the conduct of the event.

1.10.2 Conducting Field Research on Mutinies

My primary goal for field research was to conduct interviews with former mutineers and others with close involvement in the mutinies. Secondly, I wanted to collect more details about the mutinies through local reporting and government documents. My first round of field research was in Sierra Leone in April and May of 2011. This trip served to test the feasibility of conducting interviews with former mutineers. It was a successful research trip and I returned to West Africa for more extensive research from January to June of 2012. During this time I travelled to each of the three case study countries. I travelled by road, using public transport from Sierra Leone to Burkina Faso (and back), transiting through Guinea and Mali. The already arduous trip was made especially challenging by a coup in Mali in March 2012, preceded by a mutiny. The uncertainty of the situation caused the Malian

borders to be closed on several occasions (first by Mali and later by neighbouring countries). The situation also led to heightened security in Mali and surrounding countries, with visibly more troops near the border crossings and additional road checkpoints. I was likely one of the few individuals who did not mind the added inconveniences of these procedures as it allowed for more engagement with military personnel and discussions about their opinions on the Malian coup. I have included details from these conversations throughout the thesis.

The varied political and security situations in Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso and The Gambia led to great variety in the way in which I conducted research in these three countries. Below I will provide a brief summary of the differences, particularly to point out how it led to variations in the type of information I gathered. Additional information will be presented within the case study chapters. All of the interviews I conducted were in an unstructured style in which I had key questions but the respondent largely drove the conversation. All interviewees were made aware of my status as a researcher. I digitally recorded roughly one-third of my interviews, all with permission from the respondent. For the interviews in which I did not record the conversation I took hand written notes during the interview. Whether or not I asked an interviewee permission to record the discussion was based on my sense of the individual's comfort level as well as the permissiveness of the environment. For example, whereas recording on a base in Sierra Leone was generally permitted, I knew better than to even carry a recording device on a military base in The Gambia due to their heightened security sensitivities.

1.10.3 Sierra Leone

Of the three case study countries, I had the best access in Sierra Leone. This was partially because I worked closely with a young officer who I was introduced to through a friend. While he was not involved in the mutiny, he was able to assist in identifying and locating those who were. He comes from a military family- his father was a retired enlisted soldier and his brother currently serves in the presidential guards. Due to his status as an officer, I was granted permission to visit bases that would have been difficult had I been alone. In total, I visited nine military bases, which are spread throughout nearly all regions of the country. At most of

these bases I stayed on base, in the military accommodations for between two and six days. This was advantageous because it allowed for casual conversations in addition to the formal interviews. It appeared that having a foreign female civilian visiting, let alone staying overnight on base was quite unusual, especially at the remote bases and thus a stay of only a few days seemed to make a difference in the matter of information I was given. Numerous soldiers commented that I would be able to understand their complaints (which for soldiers today are mostly about living conditions) because I also endured them (temporarily). However this also had a downside as soldiers often wanted my opinion if they were being treated poorly and in one case they directly requested help in voicing their complaints to seniors (which I declined).

When I was not travelling between bases or researching at the archives I stayed in the town of Tintafor in the house of a friend. This house is a few hundred feet away from an army base and I would walk through the base daily to go to the community well and the market. I attended social events at the base and my presence appeared to be accepted by most and I was generally free to wander around the base without much hassle. These details help explain why I was able to gather more sensitive information in Sierra Leone than the other case studies where my interactions with most people were one-time encounters. In Sierra Leone most of the information that I received about plans for a future mutiny was only told to me after I had been around the soldiers for a while, or in some cases after I returned for a second round of research a year after the first trip.

Another reason why Sierra Leone was a good place to conduct interviews was that there appeared to be little sensitivity about the events in 1992 for which I was researching. This is likely because the incident occurred twenty years prior, was not violent, and most of the population responded positively to it at the time. There were individuals from the unit who did not want to be interviewed, especially those currently involved in politics, but most of the individuals I contacted agreed to discuss their involvement. In total I interviewed twenty soldiers who were closely involved in the mutiny plan and had at least a dozen casual conversations with others who were in the military at the time and familiar with the events.

In addition to the interviews, I also visited the National Archives at Fourah Bay College. While I was unable to find any official documents about the event,

there were many records of the incident in the local papers. There was an increase in press freedom in the early 1990s in Sierra Leone and therefore numerous daily and weekly papers reported the story. This reporting was generally more detailed, particularly in the use of individual names, than international reporting and followed the aftermath of the event longer than the international press.

1.10.4 Burkina Faso

The second country I conducted field research in was Burkina Faso and my experience was much different than in Sierra Leone largely because the mutinies I was most interested in occurred less than a year prior. The positive side to researching such a recent event is that it was fresh in peoples' minds and the public nature of the mutinies meant many people witnessed it first hand. However, the level of violence made it a sensitive topic for civilian and military alike. For example, one interviewee stated "it is very difficult to talk about, what they did no one could imagine, even during war that should not happen, attacking your own people, raping your own women, it was a very bad time for our country."⁷⁷ Additionally, state investigations into who was involved within the military were still ongoing, making military personnel very reluctant to discuss the events. Still, I was able to interview seven military sources, some of who were surprisingly candid given the tense environment. Military sources also informed me of other mutinies that have occurred in Burkina Faso over the last decade.

The Burkina Faso mutinies were unique compared to the other case studies because they occurred alongside large civilian protests, which together with the mutinies triggered major government responses. I therefore interviewed a wide variety of civilians within Burkina Faso in order to get a better understanding of the interplay between civilians and military personnel during these mutual actions of dissatisfaction. The civilian interviewees included labour union leaders, members of student organizations, civil servants, academics, an opposition politician, and the leader of the country's most prominent human rights organization. I also interviewed journalists from both private and government news organizations. In

⁷⁷ Author interview with civilian civil servant (Member of Ministère Chargé des Relations avec le Parlement et des Réformes Politiques), March 2012.

addition to the seven military sources I interviewed ten civilians and ran a focus group with university students that included eight individuals.

The Norbert Zongo National Press Centre in Ouagadougou was an especially valuable resource. This organization collects newspaper reporting from throughout the country, creating its own independent library and archive. Many of the units mutinying were located in remote locations and details of the event were best documented in local reporting which I was able to access at their office.

Burkina Faso was the only country in which the majority of the interviews were not conducted in English. I used a translator to assist me with the interviews and he helped me locate and contact sources. This individual was a student at University of Ouagadougou and referred to me by the American Embassy for his involvement in the language exchange programs that they host. He attended all of the interviews with me, except for those with military sources. All of my interviews were conducted in Ouagadougou, however I travelled to several other locations that were key to the mutinies including Bobo-Dioulasso and Po and will include casual conversations from those locations.

1.10.5 The Gambia

The Gambia was the last country where I conducted field research and in many ways the most difficult. The mutinies in The Gambia had the smallest number of participants of the case study mutinies, and thus there are only a small number of people who were present for the events. Additionally, unlike most West African militaries, many Gambian soldiers only stay in the military for one term of service, and it is difficult to track these individuals after they leave the military. There has been much emigration, particularly since 1994 when President Jammeh came to power, meaning many of those involved in the events are likely no longer living in The Gambia.

The political environment in The Gambia is currently tense and it was clear that even the mention of my research topic made many uncomfortable because the military and especially intelligence services are viewed with fear and suspicion. I visited the military headquarters in Banjul and was granted several interviews. However it was the only location in which I was told beforehand what questions I

could not ask. Any topics pertaining to events that have happened since Jammeh's time in office were off limits. Even questions of a historic nature seemed to be answered with reluctance, especially by the junior ranked military personnel. Following my interviews at the military headquarters I was questioned by the National Intelligence Agency (NIA). Between this experience and the lack of detailed information from the military sources, I decided it was better to not attempt to visit other military facilities in The Gambia. Instead, I interviewed several civilian sources that had worked in the government at the time of the mutinies as well as academics who had a strong understanding of Gambian political and military history.

Although The Gambia was not an ideal interview environment, the country has a well-organized and easily accessible archive where I was able to find news reporting on the mutinies. Several newspapers at the time wrote extensive reporting on the events and attended the court martial hearing for the mutineers. I also visited these news offices in an attempt to speak to the individuals who reported on the stories. The office of the newspaper *Foroyaa* was particularly generous in spending time searching through their archives to look for any additional notes on the story; however no additional information could be found.

As previously mentioned many Gambians (including former military) live abroad. The Gambian Diaspora community is very active with numerous blogs, radio stations, email lists, and social media groups, which I used to help locate sources. Additionally, The Gambia is the only country in my case studies in which there are several memoirs written by former military personnel that detail the mutinies. Therefore I was able to supplement the interviews I conducted in The Gambia with phone interviews with members of the Diaspora. Still, even in the Diaspora more requests for interviews were declined than accepted, indicating the sensitivity surrounding both political and military topics amongst the Gambian community. In total I interviewed eleven Gambians who were knowledgeable about the mutinies in 1991 and 1992.

1.11 Thesis Structure

This thesis begins with broad patterns that span the dataset and becomes narrower as it progresses. Chapter Two uses the mutiny dataset to examine the common grievances stated by mutineers and patterns in how they physically carry out a mutiny. This chapter examines the position of the rank and file in comparison to the officer corps, in which there is a particularly severe divide in terms of wealth and prestige due to the role of militaries in post-colonial Africa. I show that mutineers in West and Central Africa use a fairly limited number of tactics, thus making it possible to anticipate courses of action of mutineers. However, the predictability of a mutinies' outcome is limited, partially due to the tendency of mutinies to spread, altering the number and specific participants as well as the goals. I demonstrate how the common tactics used by mutineers serve common strategic goals.

Chapters Three and Four uses the mutiny dataset to address patterns of when mutinies have occurred in West and Central Africa. The clearest spike in mutinies occurred in the 1990s, as visualized in Figure 1.2 and Figure 1.3. Chapter Three will focus on this trend and examine the political and economic conditions in Africa in the 1990s, which may have made the region particularly mutiny-prone, and conversely why mutiny was not a popular tactic in the preceding decades. This chapter will argue that soldiers' decision to mutiny is often linked to particular political systems.

Chapter Four addresses a more nuanced trend of when soldiers mutiny, which is less apparent in the charts but becomes clear with an examination of the qualitative aspects of the mutiny dataset. This chapter shows that mutinies often follow deployments, and particularly deployments on multinational missions. I explain how deployments alter both the conditions in which soldiers find grievances as well as their view of their entitlements. This chapter brings to light the potential heightened risk that deployed units have to mutiny and shows the common grievances that soldiers find amongst these deployments.

The next three chapters consist of the case studies presented in a chronological order. Therefore Chapter Five is Sierra Leone, Chapter Six is The Gambia, and Chapter Seven is Burkina Faso. The case studies will provide both detailed analysis of the mutinies as well as situate the event within the political and military context of the state at the time that it occurred. Additionally, a summary of

relevant and related events that followed after the mutiny will serve to show potential long-term impacts of the incident. The case studies will refer back to the other chapters in order to show places in which the cases support the earlier identified patterns as well as where they contradict.

The thesis concludes with Chapter Eight, which summarizes the key findings and provides an assessment of the future of mutinies in this region.

Chapter Two- The Typical Mutiny: Patterns in Participants, Tactics, and Outcomes

2.1 Introduction

Within the global research on mutinies there is debate over whether mutinies follow a standard pattern. American military historian, Fletcher Platt, claims, “there is no such thing as a typical mutiny.”¹ Rose counters that Platt’s statement is “only partial true, since mutinies, like men, have attributes that permit at least some generalizations.”² I agree with Rose that generalizations can be made about mutinies; however the generalizations I reach in this chapter often contradict his. This is partially due to variations in our dataset: Rose focuses on early 20th century Western cases while my focus is limited to modern African mutinies.

It should not come as a surprise that there are typical behaviours within mutinies considering they are conducted by a group of individuals with shared training experiences and a lifestyle that places emphasis on conformity. While mutinies show an obvious break from the discipline instilled in a military environment, mutineers often utilize military manoeuvres and strategy to their advantage during a mutiny. What is perhaps surprising though is that we know very little about what a typical mutiny looks like in West and Central Africa. This chapter aims to begin to fill this gap by looking at common traits within the demands made by mutineers as well as the way mutinies are carried out. Attempting to document what is typical within the actions of mutineers has practical value in terms of attempting predictive analysis. However, perhaps more importantly, it helps identify recurring dissatisfaction within the ranks in the region.

This chapter first briefly discusses the role of the military in African states in order to show the historic roots in many of the mutineers’ grievances, particularly those in which they object to the advantages given to the officer corps. The findings show that

¹ As quoted in Elihu Rose, “The Anatomy of Mutiny,” 565.

² Ibid.

most mutineers' grievances involve conditions of service, in particular aspects of pay or other material benefits such as housing. However, underlying these grievances are perceptions of injustice at their own conditions compared to those of the senior ranks. Although rank and file mutineers do not make claims that they deserve equivalent pay or benefits to senior officers, there is a common feeling that the level of differentiation is extreme. This analysis builds on works of scholars such as Robin Luckham, Michael Lofchie, and Jimmy Kandeh, who have emphasized the significance of class differences within African military structures.³ While these authors place emphasis on the position of junior officers, my analysis will expand on the discussion by showing the way the class differences are often interpreted by the rank and file soldiers.

Following the discussion of common mutineer grievances, the chapter will then focus on the act of mutiny. Using the mutiny dataset, I will show that there are a limited number of tactics used by soldiers when they conduct a mutiny, indicating that soldiers are not reinventing strategies with each mutiny but rather learning from what has worked in previous attempts and adapting. Furthermore, these common tactics all serve to draw attention to the cause of the mutineers and open a dialogue with senior leadership. I will argue that mutineers are often not acting simply on impulse but rather have a particular strategy in their actions. Still, even mutinies with plans are limited in their predictability due to shifts in participants and goals as well as the various ways in which a government can respond. Lastly, this chapter will discuss the success rates of mutinies. I assess that mutinies have a short-term success rate but are limited in creating long-term changes.

2.2 The Uncomfortable Place of Rank and File Soldiers in Africa

Before delving into the specifics of mutineers' grievances and how they generally conduct mutinies, it is worthwhile to briefly situate the military, and

³ Robin Luckham, "The Military, Militarization and Democratization in Africa: A Survey of Literature and Issues," *African Studies Review* 37, no.2 (Sep. 1994): 13-75; Michael F. Lofchie, "The Uganda Coup-Class Action by the Military," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 10, no. 1 (May 1972): 19-35; Jimmy Kandeh, *Coups from Below: Armed Subalterns and State Power in West Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

particularly the rank and file soldiers, within African states. As will be further elaborated on in the next section, mutineers are typically enlisted soldiers and their grievances, even those of a material nature, regularly involve accusations against their superiors. This section will help set the stage to demonstrate that West and Central African mutineers' complaints are often grounded in a history in which the divisions between the ranks have increased as the military has become involved in politics.

The role of the military has changed in many states throughout the decades since independence but generally the military has been one of the most powerful organizations in any given state. This is not simply based on its manpower or access to weapons but due to its history of participating in, influencing, and often dominating politics. In the early years of independence the military was often viewed as the most capable and disciplined organization in most African states, largely due to its position and training during the colonial era. When militaries throughout the region began to conduct coups in the 1960s they marketed themselves as selfless saviours who would 'modernize' the state.⁴ For many their presence in politics was welcomed as the military was viewed as the only "group with the necessary skills to uplift newly independent nations."⁵ However, soon coups became endemic, with few countries spared and many coup organizers became victims of coups themselves. The military's performance in the political realm did not live up to its promises and in many cases military regimes were particularly repressive. By the 1980s the image of African militaries as saviours was long out of fashion and focus turned to ways to 'demilitarize' or 're-civilianize' politics. However, it was (and still is) difficult to relegate the military back to the barracks once they became involved in politics.

One of the main ways political leaders (both civilians and leaders from a military background) tried to insure themselves against a coup was to make certain the military, especially the officer corps, was satisfied. Samuel Decalo explains that there has been a

⁴ A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, "'Stay by your radios:' Documentation for a Study of Military Government in Tropical Africa," (Cambridge: African Studies Centre, 1981): 12-13.

⁵ Mathurin Hounnikpo, *Guarding the Guardians: Civil-military relations and democratic governance in Africa* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010): 20.

“very visible trade-off of material benefits, both to the military as a corporate body and to officers as individuals, in exchange for political fealty.”⁶ He goes on to state

The quest for alliance with the armed forces is not unlike the patron-client networks that political leaders establish with influential civilians in both the traditional and modern sectors. Stability thus becomes a direct function of the satisfaction of group and individual needs in the armed forces, and they become yet another important constituency that has to be ‘taken care of’ through spoils of office.

Corporate trade-offs may include the provision of often unnecessarily sophisticated equipment and firepower that enhances the prestige of the military, and an ever increasingly large army at that, *inter alia*, raises the status of its leaders, as well as the number of officers needed, all with prestige and remunerative repercussions, etcetera. Individual perks include not only rank and pay promotions, duty-free cars and other luxury imports, but also appointments overseas as military attaches, as well as places on refresher training-courses in prized foreign staff-colleges.⁷

In addition to these immediate benefits for senior officers were often more long-term opportunities including positions within the government and access to land or other entrepreneurial prospects. As a result, in “most African states, civil or military, army officers play a major economic role in the commercial sector.”⁸ These economic advantages are often highly profitable for a select number of individuals. For example, Herbert Howe shows that the expensive and generally unnecessary weapons systems are often desired not just for issues of prestige, as described by Decalo, but for the commissions they can earn senior officers.⁹ Additionally, the officer corps in many states has come to enjoy a high degree of impunity due to their political links.

As a result of the history of the military in Africa, their role in politics, and the privileges awarded by governments (as well as foreign governments), senior military officers are often considered elites within society. However these “spoils enticements...have mostly benefitted senior officers” and created a sharp division

⁶ Samuel Decalo, “Modalities of Civil-Military Stability in Africa,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 27, No. 4 (Dec. 1989): 573.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 573-574.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 567.

⁹ Howe, *Ambiguous Order: Military Forces in African States*, 41; For example, his research provides numerous examples of senior officers in Nigeria receiving commissions as high as twenty percent from sales of equipment with price tags in the tens and hundreds of millions (USD).

between the ranks in the military.¹⁰ Although the military is often referred to as a homogenous organization with particular privilege, in reality vast differences occur within the organization.

The prestige awarded to the military as an organization, as described above, often has limited tangible benefit to rank and file soldiers. While soldiers may be in an enviable position compared to some civilians because they have a (supposedly) regular salary, the pay for rank and file soldiers is typically low. Additionally, in some states it is common for rank and file soldiers to only receive their salary erratically, as various examples throughout this thesis will demonstrate. It is also common for enlisted ranks to supplement their salaries through other means, both legal and illegal. Housing for the lowest ranks is often limited and it is common for junior soldiers to live off base. The advantage of joining the military is likely not the initial pay but the ability to advance up the ranks. However, a lack of promotion opportunities is a common complaint amongst junior soldiers. Of course, there is a challenge in making generalization across many states and not all rank and file soldiers live in poor conditions while not all senior officers have become wealthy from their position. However the persistent claims of the gap between the lifestyles of the senior officers and those below them indicate that it is a common trend in the region.

Rank and file soldiers in Africa are in an uncomfortable position because they are the least influential members of the most powerful and elite organization in the country. The military institution may project an image of prestige but this has limited value in the daily life of junior soldiers. Still, the limited economic opportunities in most states in the region, especially for individuals without higher education, create an incentive for soldiers to maintain their position in the military. As this thesis demonstrates, instead of relinquishing their position due to dissatisfaction, they attempt to work within the system to have their conditions improved.

In terms of their socio-economic status, rank and file soldiers likely have more in common with lower classes of the civilian sector than they do with senior officers. While there is often overlap between junior soldiers and the civilian sector, there is also

¹⁰ Kandeh, *Coups from Below: Armed Subalterns and State Power in West Africa*, 208.

an intentional divide. This divide goes beyond the standard division created in most militaries where soldiers separate themselves from civilians through uniforms, grooming standards, etc. The divide in West and Central Africa between rank and file soldiers and civilians also has to do with the history of using militaries for internal policing. Soldiers were often tasked (and in many cases still are) with regime protection and in particular shielding political leaders from internal opposition. In this role the military was often in direct contact with the civilian sector but in an antagonistic way, particularly when ordered to curb civilian protests. Ethnic military recruitment in some states has further exacerbated tensions between the military and civilian populations when the military is seen as aligned with a particular ethnic group or region.

In many ways the rank and file soldiers are caught between the lower classes of the civilian world, in which they likely have a lot in common with but with whom they are disconnected from, and their military superiors whom they have little in common with but are connected with via military membership. When rank and file soldiers mutiny it often appears influenced by both actions in the civilian sector and their military superiors. For example, demands for improvements in their work conditions often sound very similar to strikes by trade unions or student organizations, as the next chapter will further expand on. However mutineers also utilize their position in the military by using intimidation and threats of violence and instability. Much as coup leaders present an image of policing the civilian politicians, mutineers often present themselves as policing the officer corps.

2.3 Private Problems

This section will use the mutiny dataset to look in more detail at who typically mutinies and what they commonly demand. As previously stated, one consistent feature of mutineers, which applies to both African and non-African settings, is that they tend to be made up of a majority rank and file soldiers. Occasionally non-commissioned officers (NCOs) take part and more rarely junior officers but for the most part mutinies involve the lowest level of the military hierarchy. Within research on mutinies from a

non-African perspective and coups in an African context, there has been speculation that internal military tensions and revolts often centre on divisions created by the development of elite units within the military.¹¹ These elite units often have heightened expectations alongside their special status and responsibilities, which when under threat can lead to a revolt. Additionally, the added equipment, training, and pay for these units often leads to resentment by 'regular' units. Within an African context the most elite units are usually those that work directly for the Head of State, such as the Presidential Guards, or units with specialized (often foreign) training, such as the parachutists or counter-terrorism units. Based on the sixty-six incidents of mutiny in the dataset, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that elite units disproportionately contribute to mutinies. There is no significant difference in the type of units that mutiny. Nearly every type of military unit can be accounted for in the dataset: army, navy, air force, gendarmerie, parachutists, commandos, presidential guards, foreign trained units, and units with foreign advisors.

Additionally, there is no significant difference in the mutiny rates for rural or urban-based units. The majority of mutinies occur in the capital city. This is expected considering soldiers are typically bringing their complaints to the government or military headquarters, both of which are usually located in the capital. Furthermore, most capitals host a sizeable number of military personnel and units. Large cities, which are not capitals, have also seen mutinies. Roughly eighteen percent of the mutinies examined in this dataset occurred in rural regions, away from major cities.

As explained in the previous chapter, when soldiers mutiny they request that leadership address specific grievances. Based on the stated demands in the mutiny dataset, it is clear that the vast majority of mutineers' grievances revolve around their daily life or terms of service. Therefore, this thesis will view mutinies as a way for junior soldiers to negotiate with their superiors over their conditions of service. This is slightly different from mutinies in other contexts, such as mutinies in the Vietnam War over objections to the mission for political reasons.

¹¹ Herbert M. Howe, *Ambiguous Order: Military Forces in African States*, 44-45; Bernd Horn, "A Law Unto Themselves? – Elitism as a Catalyst for Disobedience," in *The Unwilling and the Reluctant: Theoretical Perspectives on Disobedience in the Military*, ed. Craig Leslie Mantle, 127-138 (Ontario: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2006).

First, it is valuable to take a closer look at where soldiers find fault in their conditions of service. Mutineers in West and Central Africa most commonly make demands for payments or material items. These account for roughly seventy percent of the stated grievances examined. Payment grievances typically consist of accusations of delays in receiving pay or claims that their pay is inadequate. These two complaints are not mutually exclusive and some mutineers have claimed that their inadequate salaries are late. A more specific payment criticism involves special payments for deployments. These particular demands will be addressed in more detail in Chapter Four. Closely linked to salary complaints are grievances over material issues such as housing, food, and uniforms. These material issues are closely tied to, and often inclusive of, salaries. For example, in some states it is common for monthly salaries to include both cash and a supply of rice. Similarly, if soldiers reside on base and if the base provides meals, a portion of their salary goes to cover those expenses. Mutinying soldiers often claim that the food, housing, or uniforms provided by the military are insufficient or of less value than the money subtracted from their salaries. They demand larger cash payments of which they can then buy their own food or pay for their own housing.

The second most common grievance involves specific complaints about leadership. These demands are closely linked to the material complaints above as the officers are usually accused of having a role in missing pay or lack of other material items. The spokesperson for mutineers in Guinea in 2008 demonstrated this type of grievance by stating that the generals “do not care about the needs of the soldiers” and accused them of “hiding” the soldiers’ back pay.¹²

In some cases the soldiers appear to have had personal negative interactions with the particular officers they accuse. For example, in Republic of Congo in 1997 mutineers demanded the removal of the commander of a particular training centre, which is likely an individual that the soldiers would have had contact with.¹³ However, often mutineers seem unsure of whom to blame and call for dismissals at the most senior levels. This occurred in Guinea in 2008 when soldiers asked that the Defence Minister be dismissed and in The Gambia in 1991 when soldiers called for the most senior officer

¹² AFP, “Guinea Mutiny Reveals Rift Between Top Brass and Ordinary Soldiers,” June 5, 2008.

¹³ *Africa Research Bulletin*, February 1997, 12578.

in the military to be relieved of service.¹⁴ In these two cases it is unlikely that junior soldiers had personal interactions with these senior officers and thus their calls are more symbolic of a distrust of the hierarchy in general. In both cases the demands of the mutineers were met and these senior officers lost their positions. Although just as these demands by the mutineers appear symbolic, the firing of senior officers also has a similar feel. For example, the Gambian Colonel removed from his position following calls from mutineers in 1991 was “punished” with an Ambassadorial position in Europe.¹⁵

The third common type of grievance has to do with procedures within the military system. In these cases the soldiers complain about decisions or specific processes that they deem to be unjust or not advantageous. Examples include objections to decisions to downsize the military or transfer units to different bases. It is also common for grievances to include the promotion process or more general accusations of favouritism within the military.

An overview of the common grievances shows that mutineers are self-interested and fairly pragmatic. Mutineers rarely push for changes beyond their own conditions of service nor do they make radical requests for changes to the military structure. When asking for promotions it is almost always within a reasonable scale. For example, rank and file soldiers may ask to be promoted up one rank but not to be promoted to an officer rank. Similarly, mutineers may demand better housing but do not expect their housing to be on par with officers or even NCOs. Through their demands mutineers show a general respect or at least acceptance of the military hierarchy.

Another example of the pragmatic side of mutineers is their heavy emphasis on numbers and facts. This was apparent in my interviews with former mutineers. They would often go to great lengths to explain their salary in precise numbers (including how often they were paid) as well as listing other various costs such as rice, a pound of meat, transportation to visit family, uniforms, and boots. This is apparent in media announcements by mutineers as well. For example, soldiers in Central African Republic announced, “We pay for our uniforms which cost CFA 25,000; a pair of boots costs

¹⁴ *Africa Research Bulletin*, May 2008, 17526-17527; *West Africa*, August 12, 1991, 1336.

¹⁵ Samsundeen Sarr, *Coup d'état by the Gambian National Army* (Xlibris, 2007).

CFA 25,000, and we get 29,041- and we have families and children.”¹⁶ The same group later explained on the radio “We have continued to receive the salary of a second class private, CFA 29,041 for 15 to 16 years.”¹⁷ Similarly, soldiers in Guinea in 2008 explained their pay grievances in relation to the cost of rice in order to show that a bag of rice costs roughly half of their monthly pay.¹⁸ In these cases there seemed to be a strong desire to demonstrate in detail how their salaries could not cover the basic costs of living and in doing so soldiers were making the point that their actions were driven by necessity. By providing the exact details of their salaries and expenses soldiers also distinguished themselves from the officers whom they often accuse of economic irresponsibility. However, perpetuating themselves as sensible negotiators is likely to some degree a strategy in itself and there are plenty of examples of behaviour within mutinies, such as looting, which could not be justified by claims of necessity.

2.4 “The problems are between the generals and us”¹⁹

Mutineers’ demands for payment, improved housing, or removal of an officer, as described above, are often linked to perceptions of injustice. The sense of injustice regularly develops around large discrepancies in the privileges and economic advantages between the ranks. While all hierarchies have divisions between the rank and file soldiers and their senior officers, the divisions in West and Central Africa are often particularly severe given the unique role of the military in the region, as examined earlier. In interviews with former mutineers they regularly addressed their own conditions in comparison to what they saw as excessive lifestyles of officers. For example, a rank and file soldier involved in the 1992 revolt in Sierra Leone described the cause of the incident in the following way: “We are at the warfront, we are not being paid on time, we are not well catered for, we need better medical facilities. And

¹⁶ *West Africa*, May 5, 1996, 667.

¹⁷ *West Africa*, May 5, 1996, 667.

¹⁸ *AFP*, “Guinea Mutiny Reveals Rift Between Top Brass and Ordinary Soldiers,” June 5, 2008.

¹⁹ Quote from spokesperson of Guinea mutiny in 2008; *AFP*, “Guinea Mutiny Reveals Rift Between Top Brass and Ordinary Soldiers,” June 5, 2008.

authorities are sitting in Freetown, driving luxurious cars.”²⁰ In conversations with Sierra Leonean soldiers about their present conditions, their complaints sound similar to those of decades earlier. One soldier commented on the lifestyle of officers by questioning “if you have 10,000 and you are driving a car that costs 60,000-70,000, where did you get the money? They are building homes, mansions in Freetown. And we are grumbling, soldiers are grumbling.”²¹ The soldier’s answer to his own question was that he believed the money came from peacekeeping pay, a topic that will be further examined in Chapter Four. Here we see that it is not necessarily the inequality that soldiers object to, as any hierarchy has inequality, but rather what they view as excessive, which they represent using words like “luxurious” and “mansions.”

This perceived lavish lifestyle of senior officers is a direct contradiction to traditional military ethos, which puts emphasis on austerity. While austerity is rarely a term used to describe senior officers in Africa, there still appears to be a disdain for officers whom the rank and file soldiers deem to be living too extravagantly. The actions of soldiers in Burkina Faso in 2011 represent this belief. Mutineers vandalized and set fire to the homes of several of senior officers, including the Army Chief of Staff.²² Similar targeted attacks occurred on the residences of senior officers in Guinea in 2008.²³

It is difficult to quantify the salary differentiation between the ranks as official pay scales in Africa are usually not made publicly available and it is likely that rank and file soldiers are not aware of the particular salary of their senior officers.²⁴ No interviewee in my research ever gave a specific number for an officer’s salary and in fact salary was rarely mentioned. This is consistent with public statements by mutineers as well. Instead, complaints seemed to circulate around the idea that officers were making

²⁰ Author interview with military source S (current enlisted soldier), April 2012.

²¹ Author interview with military source L (current enlisted soldier), May 2011.

²² “Burkina Faso President Leaves Capital Amid Mutiny,” *AFP*, April 15, 2011.

²³ “Guinea Meets Soldiers’ Demands to End 2-Day Mutiny,” *Reuters*, May 27, 2008.

²⁴ There has been some attempt by scholars to make comparisons between the pay scales of various countries. For example, Lofchie showed comparisons of pay by rank between East African states following the 1964 mutinies and more recently Dr. Mobolaji Aluko has attempted to compare Nigerian pay scale to American military pay scale on his blog. Aluko’s analysis is interesting as it shows a Colonel in Nigeria makes roughly ten times that of a private whereas in the U.S. it is only four times. However, these comparisons serve limited value in terms of mutinies as mutineers are not attempting making claims that their pay structure is unjust in comparison with Western states.

money through other means due to their position. Mutineers are not alone in their observations. For example a report written by the Strategic Studies Institute in the late 1990s clearly supports the grievances made by soldiers. It stated that Nigerian “senior officers all become immensely rich through theft, while junior officers and enlisted men live in poverty” and the researchers went as far as to call for a “wholesale replacement of the officer corps.”²⁵

The perceived injustice becomes especially apparent when soldiers believe that their efforts are responsible for officers’ success. A Burkinabé rank and file soldier very blatantly expressed this opinion by stating

if he is a high officer, say a Colonel, he gets to that position through the help of those below him. He is taken care of by his juniors, but then he has no respect for them...There is much selfishness with the officers.²⁶

While this individual is speaking in more of a hypothetical sense, Chapter Four will show this perception in a direct manner by describing the perception of mutineers who claims officers have personally benefitted from rank and file deployments.

This issue of class differentiation and perceptions of corruption among officers by the ranks as detailed above is also a key argument in Kandeh’s work on junior ranks that conduct coups. He explains

Ordinary soldiers observe and take exception to the sudden embourgeoisment of their officers, which many have come to rightly believe occurs at their expense. Resentment based upon perceptions that officers are ‘stiffing’ the ranks, ‘chopping them small,’ and siphoning their supplies has often been the center of the grievance narratives of subaltern mutineers and insurgents.²⁷

However, the feelings of resentment by the rank and file go beyond the material advantages and include other privileges. For example, Burkinabé military interviewees consistently complained of a system in which senior officers were able to bring their sons into the military, regardless of whether or not they met the qualifications. Perceived impunity among the officer corps was also a key concern of mutineers in

²⁵ Kent Hughes Butts and Steven Metz, “Armies and Democracy in the New Africa: Lessons from Nigeria and South Africa,” *Strategic Studies Institute*, 1996.

²⁶ Author interview with military source E (current enlisted soldier), March 2012.

²⁷ Kandeh, *Coups from Below: Armed Subalterns and State Power in West Africa*, 7.

Burkina Faso in 2011. Rank and file soldiers felt that they were singled out for punishment due to their rank, while officers went uncharged for similar or worse offenses.²⁸

Many of the accusations made by mutineers are not of criminal offenses but rather frustrations that their leadership does not abide by the required military procedures. These perceived double standards amongst the ranks lower troop morale and undercuts the ethos of discipline, which is key to military functionality. In an interview with a Burkinabé soldier I asked the basic question “what caused the [2011] mutinies.” He responded, “the main main main cause is no respect for authority, no discipline, even the superiors do not respect military rules.”²⁹ This individual expresses the idea that discipline must start at the top of the hierarchy and seems to suggest that if superiors do not respect rules, neither will their subordinates.

When soldiers discussed their general complaints about the officer corps they usually made a point to explain that there were exceptions, individuals who did not fit the pattern. A quick look at an exception also reveals values of the soldiers. There was one particular officer in Sierra Leone who was described in a heroic manner among numerous interviewees. During one interview with a soldier I remarked “Every time I talk to people they bring up Saj Musa, why is he so popular?” The soldier’s response was very extensive but he summed up the reason nicely by stating “He demonstrated by example.” The interviewee then elaborates this with statements such as “He is the only person who wakes up at 6:00 in the morning, 8:00 in the morning everybody is supposed to be in the office... He participated in the cleaning every last Saturday of the month, he started it.”³⁰ This soldier shows that the respect for Lt. Musa was a result of his willingness to follow the same rules that were applied to the rank and file soldiers.³¹

²⁸ Author interviews in Burkina Faso, 2012. More details will be provided in Chapter Seven.

²⁹ Author interview with military source E (current enlisted soldier), March 2012

³⁰ Author interview with military source S (current enlisted soldier) April 2012; The ‘cleaning’ he is referring to is a program enacted by the military regime which came into power in 1992. It required all citizens to assist in cleaning the city one day a month.

³¹ Solomon “Saj” Musa was killed during the civil war and it is possible that his death on the ‘battlefield’ attributes to his heroic status today. However, a review of newspapers at the time shows he had a popular following well before his death. He appears in the press often and was nicknamed in the papers “The Action Man.”

This discussion of leadership shows many similarities to research on mutinies from other regions: however significant differences are also present. There is a dominant theme among mutiny scholars and military personnel, that mutinies are the fault of individual officers. Rose explains that the “view of command responsibility is a *leitmotif* throughout military history, as prevalent today [as it was] almost 200 years ago.”³² Hamby’s work titled “A Leadership Model for Mutiny in Combat” specifically addresses how individual leaders can avoid causing mutinies or handle mutinies if they occur. He leaves the reader with no doubt of his opinions for the causes and solutions of mutinies by stating “There is no magical silver bullet that will prevent mutiny; only leaders who lead effectively can forestall the phenomenon.”³³

The examples from West and Central Africa, as presented above, vary from the dominant view, which blames mutinies on individual leaders. In the cases I presented soldiers present grievances about leadership but it is expressed as a much more systemic problem. The African examples represent divisions between the rank and file soldiers and their officers that go beyond the normal hierarchical divisions that develop from differences in education, training, or experience. The soldiers raise objections about a system in which the gaps between rank and file and senior officers are often enormous in terms of economic advantages. Added to these economic differences are other concerns such as the unequal treatment under the law.

By viewing the gap between the ranks as a more systemic problem with historical roots it becomes clearer why mutinies have become a recurring regional problem, not just single exceptional incidents. Hamby argues that in mutinies “the passions involved burn out quickly” and this makes sense in his analysis that mutinies result from weak leaders and can be resolved with changes to leadership.³⁴ However, my research does not suggest that passions die easily and in fact we very often see mutinies reignite in the same countries. This is largely because although authorities may address the surface complaints (salary, food, housing), they rarely acknowledge the

³² Rose, “The Anatomy of Mutiny,” 572.

³³ Hamby, “The Mutiny Wagon Wheel: A Leadership Model for Mutiny in Combat,” 595.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 576.

systemic issues, a topic that will be further addressed in section 2.9 and will be highlighted again through the case studies.

2.5 Mutineers' Playbook

Discussions of common tactics used by mutineers are oddly absent from nearly all writings on mutinies. The opposite can be said for coup analysis in which there has been detailed and extensive work done on tactics.³⁵ This is a major gap in the mutiny literature because it means that it is very difficult to know what to expect once a mutiny begins. The analysis of tactics is valuable beyond its practicality and is also useful in determining goals. This section will first detail how a mutiny is typically conducted and then demonstrate how these various tactics are used to achieve similar goals.

The image in most peoples' minds of an African mutiny is likely one of soldiers gathered in streets firing weapons into the air. This is a fairly accurate starting point for a mutiny. Discharging firearms and mass gathering in a strategic location (military headquarters, State House, Parliament building, etc.) are among the most common tactics used by mutineers. The firing of weapons is closely linked to another common tactic, breaking into the armoury. In most parts of West and Central Africa junior soldiers do not readily have access to firearms and therefore the first step for many mutineers is to seize weapons and ammunition from the armoury. Brandishing weapons or firing weapons can serve as both a symbol of power and a threat to those not involved in the mutiny.

While the media portrayal of mutineers as gun wielding soldiers creating a chaotic atmosphere for their own benefit is partially true, it is also an incomplete picture. Mutineers are often quite strategic and creative in their tactics, gaining inspiration from their own military training as well as from successful actions used by other armed groups and civilian organizations.

³⁵ Examples include Edward Luttwak, *Coup d'etat: A Practical Handbook* (London: Penguin Press, 1968) and Harvey G. Kebschull, "Operation 'Just Missed': Lessons from Failed Coup Attempts," *Armed Forces and Society* 20, no. 4 (1994): 565-579.

One common tactic by mutineers is hostage-taking. Of the sixty-six mutinies examined in this dataset, at least fifteen incidents involved the taking of hostages. This tactic is not specific to a particular time period. It was used in the Republic of Congo in 1966 when mutineers captured the head of the army and gendarmerie.³⁶ Similarly this occurred in the Central African Republic mutinies in 1996 when mutineers took hostage the Army Chief of Staff, Energy Minister, and National Assembly Speaker.³⁷ Nigerien soldiers appear to be the most keen on using hostages as a mutiny strategy and have done so during revolts in 1992, 1993, 1998, 1999, and 2002. Their abductees include the head of the parliament, ministers, military commanders, and local authorities.

Hostage taking is a common strategy among armed groups in Africa. For example it has been used by bandits in the Niger Delta, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, and Somali pirates. However, it is not a strategy that would commonly be used in a military context. In hostage-taking by both armed groups and mutineers the value of the hostage is in the ability to pressure an exchange. For example, armed groups are usually attempting to exchange hostages for the release of prisoners or money, while mutineers exchange hostages for meetings with senior leadership or promises that their demands will be met. One important aspect that makes hostage-taking by mutineers different from other armed groups is that they are often abducting individuals from their own organization, whereas armed groups regularly go for international targets. Furthermore, mutineers are usually not attempting to hide their identity or location (as are terrorists or pirates). Lastly, mutineers are usually not overtly threatening the lives of their hostages. In the cases of hostages taken by mutineers examined here, there were no incidents in which the hostages were killed. Mutineers want to make changes to the military system or desire material gains; they do not want to be excluded and removed from the system. Therefore they must use caution when dealing with hostages, as an injured or dead hostage would not help their cause.

It is more common for mutineers to take civilian political representatives hostage than to abduct military officers. In some ways this may seem counterintuitive. One could assume that rank and file soldiers would take hostage those that they blame for

³⁶ *West Africa*, July 2, 1966, 757.

³⁷ *West Africa*, May 27, 1996, 812.

their problems, which tends to be military officers. However rank and file soldiers abducting officers and expecting the military hierarchy to respond keeps the act as an internal military matter and generally speaking the mutineers do not trust the military hierarchy. By involving political representatives mutineers work around their chain of command and bring their complaints into the political realm. Additionally, they draw wider attention to the perceived wrongdoings of their seniors.

Mutineers also often take over strategic locations as a way to assert their power and threaten authority. The tactical value of the locations utilized by mutineers range from relatively minimal to highly important. For example, mutineers in Nigeria in 2008 blocked traffic for several hours on a major road in order to draw attention to claims that they had not been paid their allowances.³⁸ While the mutiny did bring attention to their complaints and likely inconvenienced many local people, it did not threaten the stability of the nation. Other mutineers have captured more valuable targets. For example, Air Force mutineers took over the control tower and terminals at the Abidjan Airport in 1990.³⁹ Similar incidents of mutineers holding airports have occurred in Democratic Republic of Congo (1966, 1991) and Niger (1992).⁴⁰ Mutineers in Republic of Congo in 1997 held both the rail station and the power station, disrupting rail service and leaving local towns without electricity for several days.⁴¹

Controlling public or strategically important locations is similar to hostage taking in that it brings the grievances of the mutineers into a more public forum. Unlike hostage taking, controlling locations affects not just key political or military personnel, but the general civilian population as well. Targeting transit infrastructure, especially airports, also has international implications when air traffic is diverted. The longer mutineers hold strategically important locations, the more fragile a government appears, which could affect international trade and investments. Furthermore, when actions taken by mutineers affect civilians there is the threat that civilians will react, further destabilizing the situation. There is the possibility for civilians to criticize the way the

³⁸ *This Day*, "Mutiny-27 Soldiers Get Life Sentence", April 28, 2009.

³⁹ *West Africa*, May 28, 1990, 877-878.

⁴⁰ *West Africa*, July 30, 1966, 869; *West Africa*, October 7, 1991, 1674-1675; *Africa Research Bulletin*, February 1992, 10471.

⁴¹ *Africa Research Bulletin*, February 1997, 12578.

government handles the situation or perhaps even worse for a government is if the civilians side with the mutineers. Both scenarios have occurred in Burkina Faso, the former in 2011 and the latter in 1983.

In addition to its strategic value, the choice of capturing largely transportation infrastructure can also be seen as mutineers working within a domain they are familiar with. While militaries worldwide are often thought to have an external focus, in West and Central Africa the military regularly take on an internal function, similar to policing. The protection of key infrastructure is often part of their responsibility and it is particularly common for the military to be active in transportation infrastructure as evidenced with military manned road checkpoints or military personnel as airport security.

Public gathering, firing weapons into the air, taking hostages, and holding key infrastructure all serve the purpose of drawing attention to the cause of the mutineers. These tactics are not meant to be discreet; mutineers want people to know their mission. This is an important difference between coups and mutinies, as explained in the introduction chapter. Whereas coups are meant to be a definitive action, mutinies are a step in a process of negotiations. The tactics aim to gain attention and open a dialogue with leadership in an environment in which the hierarchy does not easily allow individuals to express their opinions. Channelling concerns up the chain of command, which would be the required procedure within a military hierarchy, has several complications. One is that the direct chain of command is often the problem, particularly when soldiers make accusations that their superiors have a hand in their missing salaries. Secondly, the demands of mutineers are often larger than could be addressed by their immediate superiors. For example, a junior officer or NCO would not be able to raise soldiers' salaries.

There is often ambiguity in whether mutineers are attempting to gain the attention of senior military leadership or senior political leadership. This is likely due to the lowly position of the mutineers within the hierarchy. As junior soldiers, most without advanced education, they may be unaware of how decisions, especially regarding funding, are made, and at times seem willing to negotiate with either military or political leadership. Most often it appears they would prefer to deal with political

leadership, a trend that represents their general distrust of their senior military officers. This preference can be seen in the way they often physically approach State House or demand meetings with the President.

2.6 Mutineers' Public Relations Campaign

The desire for mutineers to grab the attention of government officials, and often a wider audience, commonly leads them to utilize the media. Media also allows mutineers to circumvent their chain of command and address their concerns to political authorities. Additionally, by engaging directly with the media mutineers can create their own public relations image. As the examples below will show, soldiers often intentionally try counter the image portrayed by government sources, which is almost always negative. For example, descriptors of mutineers by government sources include "ruthless," "uncontrolled individuals," "diehards," "criminals," and "dangerous." Mutineers use media to provide an alternative narrative and often one in which they are the victims of an unjust system, rather than aggressors. The attempt to change the narrative was especially clear in mutinies in Central African Republic in 1997 when soldiers publicly demanded "a monument to the memory of the civilian and military victims of the three mutinies be erected in Bangui."⁴²

Radio is the preferred media outlet for African mutineers. There are several ways mutineers use the radio waves; the less common manner is to speak to each other. For example, mutineers in Central African Republic in 1993 first explained over the radio that they were revolting because they had not been paid for eight months and then they called on other soldiers to return to the barracks and take up arms in case of attack by other troops.⁴³ In this instance mutineers saw a radio broadcast as the fastest way to get a message across to both the government and their fellow soldiers. However, most mutineers do not use the public radio to send instructions to each other, but rather to justify their actions and lay out demands, sometimes in very specific detail. For

⁴² *West Africa*, February 1997.

⁴³ *Africa Research Bulletin*, May 1993 11012.

example, in 1996 mutineers in Central African Republic made the following announcement

First, we demand the payment of overdue salaries for 1992, 1993, and 1994. Second, the unfreezing of salaries. Third, the restoration and improvement of the Central African armed forces....Fourth, we demand that no legal proceedings should take place after the mutiny since we will stop today.⁴⁴

In a separate message the same group stated

Our living conditions are mediocre; we are treated badly and we are exposed to disease. This is why we have left the barracks. We made these demands from our barracks, but call to no avail. We have been forced to take to the streets. We have no intention of destabilizing the regime; President Patassé was democratically elected.⁴⁵

This announcement serves to personalize the mutineers. They aim to portray themselves not as soldiers who are committing a military crime but rather as individuals who simply cannot provide for themselves or their families under their current salary. These soldiers also express that the mutiny was an action of last resort. In doing so they suggest that the blame is on their leadership for not responding to earlier complaints.

While the above examples used media during a mutiny, Nigerian soldiers in 2012 contacted the media in order to threaten the government about a potential mutiny. Nigerian soldiers, serving as part of the United Nations/African Union mission in Darfur, told *Radio France International Hausa Service* that they would mutiny if they were not paid their owed allowances and airlifted back to Nigeria. In a related petition they sent to the government the soldiers stated

Nobody seems to listen to us or the plight of our families back home. Even though it is against the ethics of the military to go to the press, we are pushed to the wall because nobody listens to our cries apart from the media.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ *West Africa*, May 5, 1996, 667.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Kadir Badsha Mukhtar and Misbahu Bashir, "Nigeria: Darfur Operations-Nigerian Soldiers Threaten Mutiny- Ask to be Airlifted Home," *Daily Trust*, June 26 2012.

In this case the soldiers stress the desire to be listened to by their superiors and their willingness to take extreme measures to get attention for their concerns. Much like the example from Central African Republic above, these soldiers also acknowledge that their actions go against a military code of conduct but express that it was a measure of last resort.

The rapid increase in internet use and particularly social media potentially allows the messages of mutineers to reach much farther than radio announcements. Whereas the Nigerian soldiers' threat was announced on the radio, the story was also posted online and picked up by bloggers and reposted via Twitter, thus reaching an incalculable number of people throughout the world. The use of the internet in spreading information about mutinies came into play unintentionally in an interview with soldiers in Burkina Faso when I asked about a very specific incident within the 2011 mutinies. The soldier interviewee immediately got suspicious and questioned how I knew that particular information. I explained that it was reported in the media and I read about it on the internet from the UK. This individual was surprised to find out that the mutineers' story was broadcast around the world and the interviewer/interviewee roles were quickly swapped as he questioned me on exactly what these reports said. When the conversation was over it was clear that the soldier was excited to hear how far their story had travelled.

Other soldiers and former soldiers are already hard at work spreading their message via social media. For example, a fast way to track down former Gambian soldiers is to visit the Facebook page "Arrest Yahya Jammeh."⁴⁷ Those familiar with recent Gambian military affairs will recognize many of the names of the members. As the group name suggests, they are pushing for a coup but members also post pictures of current Gambian military officers and express their general disdain for them. Considering mutinies often involve junior rank and file soldiers, many of whom will likely be of a more technology savvy generation than their older peers, it is reasonable to

⁴⁷ While this Facebook group was active while I was conducting research, when attempting to access the page 9 months later the group page had been removed. However, there exists others that are similar, such as a group titled "Uproot Jammeh" and another called "Jammeh Step Down."

assume that the use of technology and media will be used even more pervasively in future mutinies.

All of the commonly utilized tactics such as discharging firearms, gathering in mass, taking control of strategic locations, holding hostages, and making media announcements, are designed to grab attention, open a dialogue, and pressure negotiations. While these tactics would be extreme if conducted by civilians, in a military perspective they can be considered measured and controlled. There are certainly cases in which mutineers turn to violence and destruction and these incidents will be discussed later, but as this section demonstrated most tactics at least in the initial stages of a mutiny are calculated decisions. This analysis of tactics is in opposition to many other writings on mutinies, which describe the act as ‘spontaneous.’ While there may be incidents within mutinies that are unplanned, mutinies in West and Central Africa are usually not reckless reactions. Taking control of an airport, breaking into an armoury, capturing hostages, and making media announcements all require a degree of planning and coordination in the execution phase. However, even if we view mutinies as largely planned actions, rather than impulsive decisions, they still have a high degree of unpredictability, which will be the focus of the next two sections.

2.7 Violence as an Ace or a Bluff

An important part of mutineers’ strategy is the ability to create and control instability. Unlike those in an industrial or agricultural industry, soldiers do not have any tangible goods to demonstrate or measure their worth. Instead, the value of the military rests in their ability to manage violence.⁴⁸ Within this context it is perhaps not surprising that violence is a key tool for mutineers.

It is important to note that the *threat* of violence is an integral part of a mutiny, however the *use* of violence is not. Of the sixty-six mutinies addressed in this dataset, slightly less than half involved direct acts of violence. This data contradicts writings by

⁴⁸ Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 13.

Kandeh who argues, “mutinies are by definition violent acts of defiance.”⁴⁹ However, the trend in my dataset is consistent with other studies using non-African datasets, which have also shown that mutinies tend to be nonviolent.⁵⁰ Mutineers utilize their position in the military to threaten to create a situation of instability or escalate the instability they have already created. Their main bargaining chip is their ability to also control the situation and return to the desired state of stability. Yet this is often an overly ambitious claim, especially when the group lacks cohesion. Anger, aggression, and indiscipline can dominate over strategy and individuals often act on their own accord. Involving large numbers of participants is often both the strength and the downfall of mutinies. A large group quickly gathers the desired attention but is also difficult to control.

Whereas it could be considered good news that the (slight) majority of mutinies in the region are not violent, the bad news is that when mutinies become violent the number of casualties can be very high. In the mutinies in Central African Republic in 1996 estimates of fatalities range from 200-500.⁵¹ In mutinies in Democratic Republic of Congo in 1967 there were an estimated 80 killed and 100 wounded and revolts in the same country in 1991 resulted in 100 fatalities.⁵² The Côte d’Ivoire mutinies in 2002 led to 270 deaths and mutinies in Guinea in 1996 resulted in 50 deaths and 300 wounded.⁵³ Significantly, many, if not most, of these casualties are civilians. Therefore, although mutinies are usually seen as internal military matters, in West and Central Africa they have had severe consequences on civilian populations. Understanding mutinies and in particular ways to avoid or resolve mutinies is important not just from a political stability standpoint, but also from a humanitarian perspective.

The variation in levels of violence within mutinies leads to the question of whether there are different types of mutinies. Other mutiny scholars have stated that attempts to create a mutiny typology has proven more difficult than anticipated and my

⁴⁹ Kandeh, *Coups from Below: Armed Subalterns and State Power in West Africa*, 42.

⁵⁰ Rose, “The Anatomy of Mutiny,” 568; Hathaway, “Introduction” in *Rebellion, Repression, Reinvention: Mutiny in Comparative Perspective*, XVI.

⁵¹ Andreas Mehler, “The production of insecurity by African security forces: Insights from Liberia and the Central African Republic,” *GIGA working papers*, No. 114, 2009.

⁵² Edgar O’Balance, *The Congo-Zaire Experience, 1960-98* (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd, 2000): 101-103; *West Africa*, October 7, 1674-1675.

⁵³ *West Africa*, September 30, 2002, 25; *Africa Research Bulletin*, February 1998, 13014

own experience mirrors this.⁵⁴ The fluid nature of mutinies makes it challenging to categorize them in the way that coups are at times described as a “palace coup” or a “coup from below.” Mutinies often start out in one fashion and change drastically as time goes on. Instead, I find it more valuable to view mutinies along a continuum.

On one end of this spectrum are mutinies that involve a generally cohesive unit with demands that are often specific to their particular group. I will refer to these as self-contained mutinies. In many cases these units have recently deployed together and share common grievances about their deployment experience. Since these units have a history together they often appear to respect a hierarchy within the group and mutineers in this scenario are less likely to use violence. Mutinies in The Gambia in 1991 and 1992, as described in Chapter 6, fall into this category. Another example of a self-contained style of mutiny occurred in Republic of Congo in 1997. In this case sailors locked themselves in their base in an attempt to demand better pay, living conditions and the removal of their base commander who they accused of fostering tribalism within the unit.⁵⁵

On the opposite end of the continuum to these self-contained mutinies, is a more chaotic style, which I will refer to as violent mass mutinies. These mutinies often appear to be self-destructive in nature. Although the mutinies may start with a single unit their complaints are regularly broad in scope, which gives their campaign mass appeal. As more soldiers and units from throughout the country join in they add their own personalized goals and complaints. These soldiers are unified in anger and frustration, not necessarily shared experiences or specific demands.

Rose notes that as a mutiny spreads the individual motivations of mutineers becomes widely varied. He explains that during a mass mutiny

the full gamut of the human condition is revealed. Some troops join because of intimidation, some because of opportunism. Some are true believers; some are only swimmers with the tide. Some would face the severest penalties for their principles; some would denounce their fellows at the first opportunity.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Hathaway, “Introduction” in *Rebellion, Repression, Reinvention: Mutiny in Comparative Perspective*, XV.

⁵⁵ *West Africa*, May 4, 1997, 665; *Africa Research Bulletin*, March 1997, 12664.

⁵⁶ Rose, “The Anatomy of Mutiny,” 569.

With these wide variations in motivation and goals within the group it then becomes especially difficult to organize cohesive demands or negotiations. When mutineers in these situations use violence it seems to quickly spread and often also involves property destruction, looting, and rape. As a result, this type of mutiny has the highest probability of negatively affecting the civilian population. Mutinies in Burkina Faso in 2011, which will be addressed in Chapter Seven, can be considered violent mass mutinies, as can mutinies in Democratic Republic of Congo in 1961, Central African Republic in 1996, and Guinea in 1996.

In some ways a mutiny feels like a high-risk game of poker. As a mutiny progresses the mutineers are raising the stakes, often with hostages or strategic locations, and always with the threat of violence, hoping for the government to fold. When the mutineers resort to violence they have put all their chips on the table and force the government to respond. However, the chaotic environment created by a violent mass mutiny makes negotiations difficult and the government often responds with force. Therefore the use of violence is often counterproductive to the goals of mutineers.

The use of violence can also isolate the mutineers from those who might otherwise sympathize with their cause. In an interview with the Editorial Chief of the radio station Ouaga FM in Ouagadougou, he explained that his station had initially been conducting interviews with the Burkinabé mutineers in 2011 and essentially giving them a voice to air their grievances. He says “we talked [to the mutineers] before the big unrest but then there were rapes and lootings and shootings and we do not want to interact with them anymore.”⁵⁷ He explained that the station did not want to appear supportive of the more extreme behaviour of the mutineers. Other media sources followed suit. The Burkinabé government also had initially negotiated with the mutineers but drew the line when the series of mutinies grew increasingly violent. The government eventually countered them with force, killing at least six mutineers.

When a mutiny reaches a mass level it also attracts opportunists who take advantage of the weak security situation. It becomes difficult to determine if the perpetrators are civilians or soldiers, as both can wear civilian attire. When mutineers

⁵⁷ Author interview with Editorial Chief for Ouaga FM, March 2012

engage in hostage taking, holding strategic locations, or gathering in public locations they are committing the acts in public and generally unconcerned about hiding their identity. However, looting and randomized violence are more anonymous acts, likely because it is very blatantly criminal in nature. It is common for mutineers to claim some of the more criminal aspects associated with a mutiny are not the responsibility of their group. In interviews in Burkina Faso numerous respondents (both civilian and military) described “gangsters” that “joined with the soldiers to steal.”⁵⁸

In some cases mutineers seem to acknowledge the negative effect that violence could have on their efforts and intentionally show they are unarmed. This is likely meant to deter a counter attack as well as avoid accusations of a coup attempt. A Burkinabé soldier described this tactic in a 1997 mutiny he was involved in. He explained

Soldiers were given strict orders [by NCOs] to not go near the armoury, that anyone attempting to break into the armoury will be shot. We were told what to wear, basically the most simple of uniforms, no belts, no extra clothing, they wanted to give the signal that there was nothing to hide, everyone was unarmed.⁵⁹

However even when soldiers indicate that they are unarmed, their position in an organization which has often been responsible for much insecurity in the region, still gives an implicit threat of violence or instability. As a result governments usually act with more expediency towards a mutiny than they would if members of the civil service or a trade organization were taking the same action (as is often the case when mutinies coincide with civilian demonstrations).

2.8 The Predictably Unpredictable Nature of Mutinies

A common characteristic of mutinies in West and Central Africa is their fluid nature. As mentioned in Chapter 1, mutinies are generally drawn out events, lasting

⁵⁸ Author interviews in Burkina Faso, March 2012

⁵⁹ Author interview with military source BB (former enlisted soldier, currently working in defense industry), March 2012

days, weeks or even months. Therefore, mutineers must be flexible and adaptable. They have to anticipate how the government will respond and plan their counter moves.

Linked to the issue of fluidity within mutinies is their contagious nature. The potential for a contagion has also been discussed in coup literature. The term 'coup contagion' describes a trend in which successful coups can trigger coups in neighbouring countries. There are some incidents of where this could be the case with mutinies. Mutinies in Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda in 1964 serve as the strongest example. However, a more convincing argument can be made that mutinies are internally contagious. Mutinies appear much more likely to spread within the borders of a country than to neighbouring countries. It is very common to see one unit start a mutiny and others either join in immediately or within a short period of time. Examples of incidents of an internal contagion include mutinies in Côte d'Ivoire (1990, 2000), Democratic Republic of Congo (1991), Republic of Congo (1997), Niger (2002), and Burkina Faso (2011).

Often times the mutiny does not spread immediately but instead after non-mutinying soldiers have observed the outcome of the mutiny. After a unit has successfully received their demands with minimal repercussions it is common to see other units copy the tactic. This trend can be seen in mutinies in Central African Republic in 1993. The initial mutiny involved the Presidential Guards but five days after this mutiny was resolved the Régiment de Défense Opérationnelle du Territoire (RDOT) mutinied. They made similar demands and sealed off the treasury in protest at their late payments.⁶⁰ This pattern will be demonstrated with the case of Burkina Faso in 2011 in Chapter Seven.

An explanation for the contagious nature of mutinies is that the grievances expressed by one unit often resonate with other units or individuals. Most of the earlier mentioned demands, in particular pay and housing, are issues affecting large sectors of the military. Concerns over promotion opportunities and corruption are also likely to be grievances seen in a wide sector of the military and thus likely to trigger a contagious effect. When a complaint is specific to a particular unit, it is less likely to become

⁶⁰ *Africa Research Bulletin* May 1993 11012; *West Africa* May 31, 1993, 922; *Africa Confidential* August 13, 1996, 6

contagious. The mutinies in The Gambia in 1991 and 1992, as will be highlighted in Chapter 6, were particular to the special pay promised from their deployment on a peacekeeping mission. The vast majority of their fellow Gambian soldiers did not go on the deployment and did not share in their grievances and the mutiny did not spread to other units. A similar case involved a mutiny in Liberia in 1963 over specific complaints about the way money contributed to a communal fund was handled by the officers. The complaints by these junior soldiers were specific to a particular process, quickly addressed by the headquarters (ultimately leading to the arrest of four officers and the base commander) and did not lead to similar incidents with other units.⁶¹ It is important to note though, that this dichotomy of broad grievances leading to contagions and specific grievances generally remaining contained is not always an easy separation. It is common for mutineers to list numerous complaints, some of which others can relate to. For example, soldiers may have grievances about lack of payments for a deployment that is specific to their unit but then blame the delay on corruption among higher ranks, which many others can relate to.

Another trend in mutinies, related to the issue of fluidity, is the diversion of a mutiny into a coup or a rebellion against the state. While soldiers may start their mission with a goal of having their specific corporatist claims met, there are examples of incidents in which they have ultimately overthrown political leadership. One explanation for why mutinies often change course is because they create opportunities that would not otherwise exist. The mutiny gives junior soldiers a level of control and power that the normal structure of the organization has intentionally kept from them. Ambitious individuals, often junior officers, can see this as a prime opportunity to make a move to capture more power. This type of scenario is consistent with Decalo's theories about the importance of personal elements in relations to the causes of coups. He argues

the main weakness of attempts to explain military interventions by pinpointing areas of systemic stress is in not placing sufficient weight on personal idiosyncratic elements in military hierarchies, which have

⁶¹ *West Africa* April 20, 1963, 444.

greater freedom and scope of action within a context of fragmented and unstructured political systems.⁶²

Mutinies create additional divides in the already fractured systems and provide the ideal opportunity for the personalize power-grabs that Decalo describes. Additionally, individual officers do not have to mobilize soldiers as they already have a disgruntled audience to work with.

The case of Sierra Leone in 1992, as detailed in Chapter Five, is one example of where the rank and file soldiers wanted to mutiny over their pay and conditions but officers escalated the plan to a coup. In Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire in 1999 soldiers took to the streets in a mutiny over unpaid salaries and poor living conditions.⁶³ Negotiations between the mutineers and the government were reportedly called off when Robert Guei, a former General who had been fired two years earlier, announced that President Bedie had been removed and a ruling council was formed with himself as the leader.⁶⁴ The recent coup in Mali in 2012 also fits this pattern. Soldiers began to mutiny over deployment conditions and shortly after Captain Sanogo led a coup to overthrow President Touré. Additionally in all of these scenarios internal instability increased after the coup and the military remained unsatisfied. When a mutiny escalates into a coup, the original complaints of the soldiers are often sidelined in the need to focus on the large task of developing a new political structure. This scenario will be described in the case study of Sierra Leone where soldiers explain why a mutiny is a better option to address their current complaints than a coup.

It is not only military personnel who see opportunity in mutiny; politicians are also guilty of utilizing a mutiny to advance their cause. Even if mutineers are not calling for political changes, they are drawing attention publicly to perceived problems in the military or political system. In doing so they may expose a power vacuum that others can seek to fill. Similarly, it is common to see opposition leaders or parties use it as an

⁶² Decalo, "Military Coups and Military Regimes in Africa," 113.

⁶³ *Africa Research Bulletin*, December 1999, 13783-13786.

⁶⁴ Tom Kamara, *Côte d'Ivoire: Implications of the December 1999 Coup d'Etat*, 1 April 2000, Writnet Paper 01/2000, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6a6c74.html> [accessed 4 December 2012]; Guei, initially popular with the mutineers quickly fell out of favor and he was killed during subsequent mutinies in 2002.

opportunity to call for political changes. Variations of this pattern occurred in Central African Republic in 1996 and Burkina Faso in 2011.⁶⁵

This section has shown that mutinies are often fluid and become increasingly unpredictable as they progress. It is not just a matter of mutineers attempting to make moves that are unpredictable to the government. Instead it appears that the outcomes become unpredictable to even those involved. Earlier sections of this chapter identified patterns that could help observers anticipate what tactics mutineers are most likely to use but the actions of the mutineers are only one piece of the puzzle. It is common to see other units and individuals, both military and civilian, become involved and their roles and actions add to the volatility of a mutiny.

2.9 Determining Success in a Mutiny

A final issue to address is whether mutinies work. Are the demands of mutineers usually met? This is not an easy question to answer as mutinies often involve numerous participants making a variety of demands. The dataset indicates that most mutinies are at least partially successful. The government or military hierarchy typically provides some concession, although often not the full demands. Both Hamby and Rose argue that mutinies pay out in the long run for the majority of participants.⁶⁶ They believe that while a few may be punished, the conditions protested are usually improved and the state reconsiders issues brought up by the mutineers. However, the data for West and Central Africa does not support this theory. Mutinies in this region appear to follow the opposite pattern; they pay out in the short term, not necessarily the long term. Short-term fixes such as payments to mutineers are common but many of the complaints about ingrained problems such as corruption, promotion procedures, or favouritism persist after the mutiny. This pattern was seen in mutinies in Guinea in 2007 and 2008. In several mutinies in these two years, which spread throughout the country, soldiers were paid off with bonuses, salary increases, increased transportation allowances, and reduced

⁶⁵ *West Africa* June 16, 1996; *West Africa* June 23, 1996.

⁶⁶ Hamby, "The Mutiny Wagon Wheel: A Leadership Model for Mutiny in Combat," 592; Rose, "The Anatomy of Mutiny," 572.

cost of rice.⁶⁷ Yet, requests to investigate senior officers for fraud were denied and soldiers continued to make claims that their superiors were living “in opulence.”⁶⁸ The reluctance to address the underlying issues of mutinies is likely linked back to the earlier discussion of the privileged place of senior officers in many African states. Taking action against this sector of the military could threaten political leadership or state stability.

Support for the argument that mutinies are often not a long-term fix can also be found in the list of mutinies in the previous chapter (Figure 1.1). In the list there are numerous examples of countries that experience mutinies over and over again with soldiers usually expressing similar grievances in each mutiny. For example, Burkina Faso experienced six mutinies in a matter of eleven years, Niger had five in ten years, and soldiers in Central African Republic rebelled six times in eight years. The persistent problems within the Burkinabé military, despite numerous mutinies, will be addressed in more detail in Chapter Seven.

Another way to analyze whether mutinies are successful is to examine if and how mutineers are punished. Mutinies would likely not be considered successful for those involved if the action resulted in the mutineers being dismissed from the military or jailed. Like many aspects of the military, punishments are often not a matter shared with the public and trials are often done through court martials (internal military court system). However, there are also times in which governments highlight the punishments, likely in hopes that it will serve as a deterrent for other soldiers. Based on the dataset, the most conclusive thing that can be said about the punishment of African mutineers is that there appears to be no clear pattern. African governments are not necessarily lenient on mutineers, as Hamby and Rose claim when discussing mutinies from a Western perspective.⁶⁹ It is also not the case that only ringleaders are punished, as they also suggest. There are numerous examples of harsh punishments that go beyond just the mutinying unit to others in the military and officers. For example, one of the first post-colonial West African mutinies occurred among a Ghanaian unit deployed

⁶⁷ *Africa Research Bulletin*, March 1st-31st, 2007; *Africa Research Bulletin*, February 1, 2008.

⁶⁸ *Africa Research Bulletin*, March 1st-31st, 2007, 17015.

⁶⁹ Hamby, “The Mutiny Wagon Wheel: A Leadership Model for Mutiny in Combat,” 592; Rose, “The Anatomy of Mutiny,” 571.

to Congo. Following the mutiny, which involved a single unit, 125 soldiers were dismissed, 6 given jail terms, and the ringleader was sentenced to death (the sentence was later commuted to life in prison).⁷⁰ Following a mutiny in Niger in 2002, 268 soldiers were arrested, a number of whom spent eighteen months in prison. Similarly, the mutinies in Burkina Faso in 2011 resulted in the dismissal of 566 soldiers, 217 of which were brought up on criminal charges.⁷¹ However, there are also plenty of examples, also across time, of where mutineers received minimal or no punishment.

As this section has shown, measuring success in mutinies based on short or long term gains and punishments is rather inconclusive on the question of whether mutinies generally work in favour of those who take the risk to become involved. Perhaps this data about success is less important than the perceptions of soldiers who indicate their belief that mutinies work by continuing to carry out mutinies across the region. Soldiers are trained in calculating risks, which is an important part of combat. Therefore, it is unlikely that mutinies would continue to be a tactic that soldiers use if they did not believe they had a good chance of success.

The following chapter will enforce the point that soldiers calculate their chances of success before engaging in a mutiny by demonstrating that mutinies occur more often in regimes with some respect of democratic principles. Part of the explanation for this trend is that soldiers have deemed that these governments are more likely to be receptive to their grievances and thus their probability of success is heightened.

2.10 Conclusion

In returning to the debate of whether there is such thing as a typical mutiny, this chapter has demonstrated that although each mutiny is to some degree unique, there are also particular aspects of mutinies that are common across states and time. Mutineers' grievances in the region generally concern issues of their conditions of services, which can include both material aspects (salary, housing, etc.) and military procedures

⁷⁰ *West Africa*, March 18, 1961, 298.

⁷¹ Lila Chouli, "Peoples' Revolt in Burkina Faso," in *Africa Awakening: The Emerging Revolutions*, eds. Firoze Manji and Sokari Ekine (Oxford: Pambazuka Press, 2012): 143.

(promotions, relocations, etc.). Underlying the desire for improved conditions is often a sense of injustice over perceptions that their conditions are at extreme odds with the conditions of senior officers. This exceptional gap between the ranks has developed as a result of the unique role of the military in African politics, both in colonial times and particularly post-independence.

The perceptions of injustice that go along with a decision to mutiny are just as important to understanding a mutiny as are the publicly declared grievances but they are difficult to observe through media reporting. The less tangible aspects of mutinies will be addressed further through case studies using interviews with former mutineers. The publicly declared grievances generally have a clear solution, although the time it would take to implement the solution varies. For example, soldiers can be paid, unacceptable leaders can be fired, and issues such as promotion criteria can be adapted. Yet the grievances have often been long brewing and become accompanied with feelings of distrust, disrespect, and contempt, which are harder to remedy. This is an important trend observed in non-African mutinies as well. Lawrence James, studying British mutinies, writes, “although the genesis of a mutiny could be attributed to trivial matters, the form and level of the resultant collective action could be completely disproportionate to the original case.”⁷² Even if mutinies from the surface appear to be pay disputes, it is often more accurate to view them as a sign of severe issues within an armed force.

The dataset has shown that mutineers typically use a rather limited number of tactics, which include public gathering (often in proximity to decision makers), firing weapons in the air, taking hostages, and holding strategic locations. These tactics serve the purpose of publicly expressing dissatisfaction and forcing a dialogue with leadership about demands. This desire for attention to their cause is further achieved through the relatively new trend of mutineers directly engaging with the media. Despite a recurring pattern of tactics, mutinies in practice are not predictable. In many cases the cohesion needed for a mutiny proves to be very tenuous and dissolves as the mutiny spreads and gains more participants.

⁷² James, *Mutiny: In the British Commonwealth Forces, 1797-1956*, 13-15 as summarized in Howard G. Coombs, ed. *The Insubordinate and the Noncompliant: Case Studies of Canadian Mutiny and Disobedience, 1920 to Present*, 16.

The threat of violence is the most valuable tool used by mutineers. Even when mutineers do not directly involve violent actions, their position within an organization that has the ability to cause widespread instability as well as a history of doing so, causes alarm among both political and military leadership. Although the threat of violence is the strength of mutinies, the use of violence is often their downfall. Violent acts, especially against civilians, are likely to isolate the mutineers and potentially trigger a counter attack.

One aspect of a typical mutiny in West and Central Africa that has been absent from this chapter is when they typically happen. This topic will be discussed in the following two chapters, which will identify particular contexts in which soldiers often decide that their conditions of service are unacceptable.

Chapter Three- The Unlikely Democrats

3.1 Introduction

When mutinies in West and Central Africa are charted chronologically, the most eye-catching trend is the dramatic increase in the 1990s (see Figure 1.2 in Chapter One). There were twenty-eight mutinies in this decade, accounting for forty-two percent of all mutinies in the dataset, which spans a fifty-two year time period. This chapter serves to explain this unequal distribution by linking the increase in mutinies in the 1990s to the political and economic context of the time.

The spike in mutinies in the 1990s corresponded with what is often referred to as the democratization period in Africa. It was a time of both turbulence and hope with quick collapses of authoritarian regimes, increases in competitive elections, and more political rights for the average citizen. However, debates continue about whether the political reforms seen during the 1990s were successful and lasting.¹ The political changes during this period were a result of both international pressures as well as local involvement, in which many Africans across the continent became actively engaged in demanding reform. Richard Joseph refers to these events as the “awakening process.”² Similarly, the rank and file soldiers in the region also seemed to be reawakened after decades of limited incidents of mutiny.

Eboe Hutchful argues that the democracy movement “won the battle for civil society but lost the battle for the military.”³ He laments the “failure of the democracy

¹ Several examples of volumes dedicated to the topic include Larry Diamond and Marc Plattner, eds. *Democratization in Africa: Progress and Retreat*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2010); Abdul Raufu Mustapha and Lindsay Whitfield, eds. *Turning Points in African Democracy* (Suffolk: James Currey, 2009); E. Gyimah-Boadi, ed. *Democratic Reform in Africa: The Quality of Progress* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004).

² Richard Joseph, “Challenges of a ‘Frontier’ Region,” in *Democratization in Africa: Progress and Retreat*, 2nd ed. Eds. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 2010): 4.

³ Eboe Hutchful, “Military Issues in the Transition to Democracy,” in *The Military and Militarism in Africa*, Eboe Hutchful and Abdoulaye Bathily, eds. (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1998), 608.

movement to 'capture' key sectors of the military."⁴ I agree with Hutchful that militaries in the region overall were not active participants in progressing the movement; however I will argue that in many ways they were 'captured' by the themes of the movement. Just as civil society rediscovered their popular voice, so did the military, although the junior soldiers expressed theirs through mutinies.⁵

Part of the explanation for the overlap between civilian and military demands in the 1990s is that both were negatively affected by international economic changes at the time. The chapter will begin by addressing these changes and will demonstrate the effects of shifts in Cold War relations on militaries in the region. The similarities between the civilian and military movements go beyond shared economic hardships and I will show ways in which mutineers appeared inspired by the themes of the democratization movement. They displayed awareness of political themes of the time by using popular discourse from the democratization movement within their public statements. While this chapter will focus mostly on the 1990s, its lessons are not restricted to this time period. The last section of the chapter will look beyond the 1990s and use Freedom House data to demonstrate that mutinies most often occur in countries that display respect for civil liberties and political freedoms. Mutineers likely view democratic leaders as more responsive and they often utilize the political freedoms and civil liberties that are associated with democracies to their advantage during mutinies.

There is also possibly a methodological explanation to the trend of limited mutinies in the 1970s and 1980s followed by a spike of mutinies in the early 1990s. Many states in this region lacked press freedoms during the 1970s and 1980s and regimes maintained tight control over the domestic sources of information and banned independent news outlets.⁶ Mutinies are generally considered a threat and embarrassment to the state and state media outlets are less likely to publicize a mutiny. Therefore, there may have been mutinies in the 1970s and 1980s, which were put down quickly and never reported. "Missing mutinies" is a possibility for all eras covered in

⁴ Hutchful, "Military Issues in the Transition to Democracy," 608.

⁵ "Rediscovery of a popular voice" borrowed from Paul Nugent, *Africa Since Independence*, 2nd Ed., 377.

⁶ Adebayo Olukoshi "State, Conflict, and Democracy in Africa: The Complex Process of Renewal," in *State Conflict and Democracy in Africa*, ed. Richard Joseph (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999): 454.

the dataset but most likely when independent reporting is absent. Still, I do not believe the methodological explanation discounts the pattern and I will show throughout this chapter that there are numerous reasons for both the lack of mutinies in the 1980s and prevalence of mutinies in the 1990s.

3.2 Global Trends Lead to Ground Level Complaints

As the previous chapter explained, most mutinies involve concerns over the terms of service of rank and file soldiers and specifically aspects of their pay. This section will show that increased soldier dissatisfaction in the 1990s can be partially attributed to international economic factors at the time. It will also demonstrate how the end of the Cold War affected the soldiers' conditions as well as their willingness to make demands to the government.

The 1980s were a financially difficult time for African states. By the beginning of the decade "virtually every African country was manifesting signs of acute economic distress, reflected in a mounting and unsustainable debt burden, a permanent trade deficit and an acute fiscal crisis which meant that the state was unable to maintain basic infrastructure or fund essential social services."⁷ International financial institutions and Western governments deemed that uncontrolled state expenditures were a primary cause of the economic crisis across the continent and African states were pressured to accept Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). SAPs required states to pursue economic reforms as stipulated by international institutions in order to receive loans from them.⁸ A key aspect to the required reforms was a reduction in state expenditures in general and the number of public sector employees specifically.⁹ These programs therefore threatened the interests of the military, which had grown substantially throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s. In particular,

⁷ Nugent, *Africa Since Independence*, 330-331.

⁸ Christopher Clapham, *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1996): 170.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 172.

donors attempted to impose a predetermined ceiling (or 'acceptable level') on the military expenditures of the states. These attempts were directed especially at those states deemed to be engaged in 'excessive' or 'unproductive' expenditures on the military at the expense of the social sector and economic development.¹⁰

Although most states formally accepted SAPs, there were various ways in which they attempted to manoeuvre around full implementation of the required changes.¹¹ Wuyi Omitoogun explains that disagreements between African states and donors over what constituted appropriate military spending "led to two unintended consequences: (a) the deliberate manipulation of military expenditure figures; and (b) the resort to off-budget spending, which further compounded the problem of public expenditure management."¹² The general lack of transparency in military spending that occurs in many states combined with the intentional manipulation in relation to SAPs makes it difficult to assess military spending in the 1980s and into the 1990s.

Despite questions about the reliability of state figures, there have been some attempts to examine trends in military spending across decades. For example, Nadir A. L. Mohammed analyzed the "average levels of military expenditures, military burden, arms imports, relative size of the armed forces to total population, and the ratio of capital costs of total military spending" for 13 African countries between 1963-1987. While acknowledging that there were variations between countries he concludes that the previous mentioned indicators "increased gradually in the 1960s, escalated sharply during the 1970s, reached a peak in the late 1970s, and displayed a significant reduction in the 1980s."¹³

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) can be used to extend Mohammed's analysis into the 1990s and beyond. Its database of military

¹⁰ Wuyi Omitoogun, "Introduction," in *Budgeting for the Military Sector in Africa: The Processes and Mechanism of Control*, eds. Wuyi Omitoogun and Eboe Hutchful (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006): 1.

¹¹ Nicolas Van De Walle, *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979-1999* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 64-112.

¹² Omitoogun, "Introduction" in *Budgeting for the Military Sector in Africa: The Processes and Mechanism of Control*, 1-2.

¹³ Nadir A. L. Mohammed, "Trends, Determinants and the Economic Effects of Military Expenditures in Sub-Saharan Africa," in *The Military and Militarism in Africa*, eds., Eboe Hutchful and Abdoulaye Bathily (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1998), 93-94; Mohammed's dataset draws his conclusions from analysis of 13 African countries.

expenditures starts in 1988 and continues into the present year.¹⁴ The figures show a steady decline in military expenditures from the late 1980s through the late 1990s across sub-Saharan Africa. During this period military expenditure was the highest in 1989 when total military expenditure was \$13.9 billion and reached its lowest in 1996 with \$9.1 billion.¹⁵ The figures also decreased when examined as a proportion of GDP (from 3.0 percent in 1990 to 2.6 percent in 1998) and as a proportion of central government spending (from 11.8 percent to 8.5 percent).¹⁶

However, as Geoff Harris points out, these reductions were disproportionate across Sub-Saharan Africa with South Africa, Angola and Ethiopia accounting for the largest decreases in expenditures.¹⁷ The decreases in these cases relates to settlements that were reached following periods in which states (and their international allies) deemed it necessary to maintain high military spending. Analysis of specific countries within West and Central Africa using the SIPRI dataset shows a varied picture but the pattern of declining military spending from the late 1980s to late 1990s is still a general trend in many states. For example, military spending in Burkina Faso was nearly halved between 1990 and 1996, while Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire also saw decreases in military spending between 20 and 35 percent. There were exceptions to the trend, which can be explained through an examination of the specific political context of the time. For example, Sierra Leone's substantial increase in military spending throughout the 1990s can be attributed to its civil war. Unfortunately, many of the countries that are most mutiny prone (Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Guinea Bissau, Niger, Benin) have multiple years of missing data or no data at all, which makes it unfeasible to assess changes in their military spending.

In relation to decreased defence funding, the number of military personnel was reduced from the 1980s into the 1990s. The size of sub-Saharan African militaries had quadrupled between 1963 and 1979 but then fell by a third by the mid 1990s.¹⁸ The data

¹⁴ Dataset can be accessed at <http://www.sipri.org/>

¹⁵ All figures are set to USD 2011 exchange rate.

¹⁶ Geoff Harris, "The Case for Demilitarisation in sub-Saharan Africa," in *Achieving Security in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Geoff Harris (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2004): 3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁸ Jeffrey Herbst, "African Militaries and Rebellion: The Political Economy of Threat and Combat Research," *Journal of Peace Research*, 41 (2004): 359.

above shows that African militaries were at their prime, in terms of size and funding, during the 1970s but were downsized into the late 1980s. For many militaries the cuts continued and spending reached its lowest level in the 1990s. Spending across the continent then increased again in the 2000s and beyond.

In order to understand the increase in mutinies in the 1990s it is necessary to view how the economic conditions presented above affected the average soldier. Military spending alone is not a strong indicator of whether a military is content, especially at the lower levels, as military spending does not necessarily equate to better conditions for soldiers.¹⁹ However, we are not left guessing about how the economic conditions affected the daily lives of rank and file soldiers because they vocalized their discontent. By the mid 1990s soldiers in at least Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gambia, Guinea, Niger, Republic of Congo, and Sierra Leone had all publicly claimed that they had not been paid their salaries or other monetary dues. A lack of salary payments was paralleled in the civil service in many countries as well.²⁰ Many soldiers also made complaints about decreased standards of living within the military.

Decreases in internal military spending is only one factor that contributed to declining military satisfaction in Africa in the late 1980s and into the 1990s; another important factor was changes to Cold War relationships. Throughout the Cold War the international superpowers vied for African state loyalty and offered military assistance as a key incentive. However by 1985 the Soviet Union began to disengage with Africa and the Western allies soon followed suit. By the end of the 1980s both "had abandoned Africa as a geostrategic outpost."²¹ The end of the Cold War also brought an end to much of the foreign military assistance and other perks that the military had become accustomed to, such as foreign military training. William Thom explains that training

¹⁹ Michael Bratton and Nicolas Van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 244.

²⁰ Chris Allen, "Understanding African Politics," *Review of African Political Economy* 22, 65 (Sep. 1995): 312.

²¹ Michael Bratton, "International versus Domestic Pressures for Democratisation in Africa," in *After the Cold War: Security and Democracy in Africa and Asia*, eds. William Hale and Eberhard Kienle (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1997): 160.

following the Cold War was “almost nonexistent” for most African states.²² This was due to both decreases in foreign military training and reduced funds available for internal training.

African states had also benefitted from military equipment as a result of Cold War partnerships; however this largely declined along with the end of the Cold War. For example, Howe describes the dramatic decrease in terms of equipment by noting, “between 1988 and 1995 official transfers in sub-Saharan Africa declined from \$4.27 billion to \$270 million.”²³ This figure largely symbolizes the shift from official state-to-state transfers of expensive equipment (aircrafts, tanks, etc.) to a more gray market of small arms sales. Although many of the more expensive weapons were unnecessary for the type of conflicts most countries endured, the downgrade likely symbolized a loss of prestige to many in the military.

With pressure to cut military spending and reduced assistance from abroad, equipment and maintenance in the late 1980s was neglected.²⁴ The equipment and maintenance deficiencies as well as training shortfalls were not of immediate importance to most states in West and Central Africa at the time because most were not involved in conflict. However, this changed in the early 1990s when most Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) members became involved in the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone and began contributing troops to other regional peacekeeping operations. The reduced manpower and inadequate training and equipment had a particularly negative effect on rank and file soldiers as they bore the brunt in regional conflicts, both within their own countries and as regional peacekeepers. Chapter Four will further expand on the trend of mutinies linked to combat deployments.

One may question why soldiers began to mutiny only in the 1990s if their conditions were decreasing by the mid to late 1980s. Scholars have raised similar questions about why the civilian democratization movement gained ground when it

²² William G. Thom, “An Assessment of Prospects for Ending Domestic Military Conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa,” *CSIS Africa Notes*, No. 177, 1995, 3.

²³ Howe, *Ambiguous Order: Military Forces in African States*, 80.

²⁴ Robin Luckham, “Taming the Monster: Democratisation and Demilitarisation” in *The Military and Militarism in Africa*, eds., Eboe Hutchful and Abdoulaye Bathily (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1998): 589.

did.²⁵ Just as there is no singular reason to explain the civilian timing, there are also likely several reasons why soldiers were reluctant to mutiny in the 1980s. It could be the case that conditions were not quite bad enough in the 1980s to trigger a mutiny. Although defence spending had decreased in the late 1980s, widespread accusations of non-payment did not begin until the early 1990s. Additionally, there was little indication that the largely authoritarian leaders who ruled in the 1970s and 1980s would make concessions to mutineers, which could have served as a disincentive. The reduced likelihood of mutinies under authoritarian regimes extends beyond this time period and will be further examined in section 3.6.

It is also likely that the Cold War relationships that were strong in the 1970s and present, although weakening, in the 1980s served as a deterrent for mutinies. During the Cold War many African states relied on direct military support from their non-African allies. For example, France deployed troops at least seven times in the 1970s and 1980s to assist African leaders.²⁶ Howe explains that consistent willingness of foreign nations to intervene on the behalf of African leaders “undoubtedly dampened the aspirations of some potential insurgents or invaders.”²⁷ It also likely caused potential mutineers to rethink plans to revolt. Junior soldiers would have been aware that they would stand no chance against an attack by better-equipped and trained foreign soldiers.

The end of the Cold War also reduced the willingness of non-African states to intervene in African conflicts. France, who had once been quick to deploy its paratroopers to assist its former colonies, ended many of its mutual defence agreements with African countries. For example, “the French government informed Felix Houphouet-Boigny, its key African ally, that he could not longer count on French military reinforcements to contain domestic unrest.”²⁸ Interestingly, Houphouet-Boigny tested this threat during mutinies in the spring of 1990. France stood by its word and refused Houphouet-Boigny’s request for military assistance in putting down the mutinies.²⁹ As a result, Houphouet-Boigny gave in to many of the mutineers’ demands.

²⁵ Bratton, “International versus Domestic Pressures for Democratisation in Africa,” 179.

²⁶ Howe, *Ambiguous Order: Military Forces in African States*, 78.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Bratton, “International versus Domestic Pressures for Democratisation in Africa,” 165.

²⁹ *West Africa*, 28 May-3 June, 1990, 877.

While the high likelihood of foreign intervention throughout the 1970s and 1980s may have been a deterrence of mutinies, the lack of foreign intervention in the 1990s may have had the opposite effect. Without the possibility of foreign assistance, leaders in the early 1990s were quick to acquiesce to soldiers' demands in order to avoid further instability, which was already growing with popular protests at the time.

3.3 Mutual Mobilization

While the previous section examined how economic trends and shifts in international relations led to more grievances among the military, this section will show that the political mood of the time also likely played a part in the increased mutinies. The swift regime changes that took place in the 1990s, following decades of authoritarian leadership can be attributed to both international and domestic factors. Structural adjustment programs did not turn out to be a quick cure for the ailing economies and as the Cold War came to an end international institutions and Western governments decided that the "absence of democratic government and political accountability in Africa was a significant contributory factor in economic malaise."³⁰ External donors began to introduce political conditionality to aid allocations in which recipient countries had to demonstrate respect for human rights and progress towards democracy. Under the deteriorating economic conditions most states had little choice but to concede to political conditionality, at least to some degree. While the political conditionality served as warnings for leaders who had grown accustomed to neglecting democratic principles and human rights, in practice it was often selectively enforced.³¹ This assessment will focus more attention on the domestic pressures for change as those likely had more of an influence on mutineers.

By the late 1980s the credibility of single-party systems was challenged not only internationally but also internally. The decreasing per capita income levels for the average African caused people to further question the existing authoritarian and military-

³⁰ John Wiseman, "Introduction" in *Democracy and Political Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. John Wiseman (New York: Routledge, 1995): 3.

³¹ Bratton, "International versus Domestic Pressures for Democratisation in Africa," 184; Allen, "Understanding African Politics," 313.

led political systems. Shared economic hardships led to a “coalescence of political participation by all levels of society from elite to mass level.”³² One of the main ways in which this coalescence transpired was through mass protests.³³

The mass protests, which initially involved economic demands, widened to include political reforms.³⁴ However, they often lacked a cohesive political agenda, with protestors demonstrating more clearly what they were against (“the repressions and predations of big-man rule”) than what they were for.³⁵ Chris Allen et. al. note that while the popular calls for “good governance” were often undefined, the movement can generally “be seen to include such elements as the rule of law, the safeguarding of basic human rights- including the right to organize, freedom of expression and freedom of the press- and the presence of honest and efficient government.”³⁶ While mutineers in the 1990s did not directly demand government improvements in these same areas, examples in the following section will show that issues such as rule of law and human rights were themes also expressed in mutinies. Closely linked to the calls for “good governance” were demands for multiparty elections and much emphasis in the civilian sector was placed on building the democratic “hardware”, such as electoral institutions and political parties.³⁷ However, for this assessment, more attention will be paid to the broader themes of the movement than on the implementation of democracy through elections. Mutineers did not champion the need for multi-party elections and in some cases such as Senegal, soldiers were not even allowed to participate in elections (until 2007). However, the next section will show that mutineers did occasionally comment about their respect for elections.

³² Wiseman, *Democracy and Political Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 5.

³³ Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle show that throughout the 1980s there were around twenty incidents of political protests annually in sub-Saharan Africa but in 1991 alone there were 86 major political protests within the thirty countries they studied.; Michael Bratton and Nicolas Van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*, 3.

³⁴ Wiseman, *Democracy and Political Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 5.

³⁵ Abdul Raufu Mustapha and Lindsay Whitfield, “African Democratisation: The Journey So Far,” in *Turning Points in African Democracy*, eds. Abdul Raufu Mustapha and Lindsay Whitfield (Suffolk: James Currey, 2009): 1; Michael Bratton and Robert Mattes, “Support for Democracy in Africa: Intrinsic or Instrumental?” *Afrobarometer Paper* No. 1, 2000, 2.

³⁶ Chris Allen, Carolyn Baylies, and Morris Szeftel, “Editorial: Surviving Democracy?” *Review of African Political Economy*, 54 (July 1992): 8.

³⁷ Abdul Raufu Mustapha and Lindsay Whitfield, “The Politics of African States in the Era of Democratisation,” in *Turning Points in African Democracy*, Abdul Raufu Mustapha and Lindsay Whitfield, eds. (Suffolk: James Currey, 2009), 225.

Additionally, during the 1990s there were “soundly based popular perceptions that those closely associated with government did not personally share the effects of economic decline and, through massive corruption of public office, actually prospered whilst the majority suffered.”³⁸ Michael Bratton and Robert Mattes note a similar observation by stating, “Judging by the issues raised in the streets, people seemed to want accountability of leaders and to eliminate inequalities arising from official corruption.”³⁹ Similar to the complaints made by the civilian sector, mutineers also highlighted the large gap between wealth and lifestyle within a military context and attributed the large differences to corruption. As later examples will show, mutineers also made demands for accountability for their leadership. Lastly, like the civilian sector, mutinying soldiers saw that one way to rectify the situation was to pressure change through a shared voice and both groups mobilized, although in a different fashion.

Both the civilian democratization movement and the military mutinies also represent the desire for a reconfiguration of power dynamics. This is consistent with Robert Dahl explanation of democratic theory which he states at a minimum involves “the processes by which ordinary citizens exert a relatively high degree of control over leaders.”⁴⁰ Although the civilian democratization movement was often unclear in its specific political goals, there was a general sense of empowerment which Bratton and Mates explain involved “citizens attaining a new measure of self-confidence and a wider scope of taking control of their own lives.”⁴¹ Mutinies can also be seen to represent a high degree of empowerment from the lower ranks and a desire for more control of their situations, neither of which are traits normally inherent in military hierarchies. The similarities in the themes of the democratization movement and the military mutinies should not be seen as a coincidence, but instead it is more likely that junior soldiers gained inspiration and ideas from the movement.

³⁸ Wiseman, “Introduction” in *Democracy and Political Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 5.

³⁹ Michael Bratton and Robert Mattes, “Support for Democracy in Africa: Intrinsic or Instrumental?” *Afrobarometer Paper* No. 1, 2000, 2.

⁴⁰ Robert A. Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory: Expanded Edition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006): 3.

⁴¹ Bratton and Mattes, “Support for Democracy in Africa: Intrinsic or Instrumental?” 3.

Several examples will help illustrate this overlap between themes in the democracy movement and mutinies in the 1990s. First is the case of Côte d'Ivoire in which "the economic crises of the 1980s that affected most African countries, created peculiar kinds of problems" for President Houphouët-Boigny.⁴² "The government had long paid farmers a higher proportion of the world price of the country's agricultural commodities, especially coffee and cocoa, than had most African governments."⁴³ When world prices for coffee and cocoa dropped and international donor community demanded austerity measures, President Houphouët-Boigny decreased subsidies, imposed new taxes, and eliminated many government jobs. However, the economic crisis did not stop lavish state expenditures such as a basilica in Yamoussoukro for the price of \$300 million.⁴⁴ In February of 1990 the government announced a general cut of public wages by up to 40 percent and an 11 percent rise in income taxes.⁴⁵ This caused a massive reaction and students, utility workers, educational and professional associations, taxi-drivers, hospital staff, and factory workers orchestrated strikes and street protests throughout the following months.⁴⁶ They called for both economic and political reforms.

In May of 1990 it was the military's turn to express their discontent. On May 14, around one hundred rank and file soldiers attempted to take over the state-run radio station. The radio staff resisted the attempt and helped arrange a delegation of the soldiers to meet with the president. The president promised the mutineers increased salaries, better living conditions, and reenlistment.⁴⁷ His willingness to quickly give in to the soldiers' demands was likely due to an increased dependency on the military in the face of a growing civilian movement. As previously mentioned, Houphouët-Boigny requested French military assistance but was denied the help. Air force members took

⁴² Jennifer Widner, "The 1990 Elections in Côte d'Ivoire," *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 20, no. 1 (Winter, 1991): 31-41.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 32.

⁴⁵ Richard Crook, "Côte d'Ivoire: Multi-party democracy and political change: surviving the crisis," in *Democracy and Political Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, John Wiseman, ed. (London: Routledge, 1995): 16.

⁴⁶ Crook, "Côte d'Ivoire: Multi-party democracy and political change: surviving the crisis," 16; *West Africa*, June 18-24, 1022.

⁴⁷ *West Africa*, May 28, 1990, 877-878; *Africa Research Bulletin*, June 1990, 9693.

note of the army success and two days after the army mutiny they staged their own revolt using more severe tactics. The fifty air force members armed with semi-automatic weapons seized the control tower and a terminal building of Abidjan International Airport. Similar to the army recruits, they were angry over low pay and poor living conditions. However, they also added grievances over corruption amongst the officer corps, claiming that their superiors docked their pay on a regular basis for little reason.⁴⁸ When the government agreed to meet with the airmen to discuss their complaints the mutineers initially refused because one of the mediators was the Defence Minister. The mutineers called him a 'corrupt billionaire' and demanded his removal from the mediation process.⁴⁹

The mutineers in Côte d'Ivoire were likely inspired by the actions of local civilian protestors who had been expressing their discontent for months prior to the mutiny. The civilian and military personnel shared both economic grievances and the idea that corruption or general government economic mismanagement was a cause of their hardship.

The Gambia provides another good example of the overlap between civilian movements and mutinies, which Chapter 6 will expand more on. In the early 1990s The Gambia shared the burden of economic crisis seen throughout the continent, and growing dissatisfaction was expressed through public protests. Soldiers mutinied in 1991 after failing to receive their deployment pay. They accused their officers of being behind late payment and expressed objections to corruption in the officer corps. The issue of corruption was also mirrored in the civilian realm as several corruption scandals had recently been revealed in the press. John Wiseman and Elizabeth Vidler explain that public awareness and resentment over corruption in The Gambia was undoubtedly at an all time high around the same time that Gambia soldiers mutinied in 1991 and 1992.⁵⁰ The mutineers took their complaints directly to President Jawara at State House. They specifically called for the removal of the highest-ranking officer in the country, Colonel

⁴⁸ *West Africa*, May 28, 1990, 877-878; *West Africa*, June 25, 1990, 1090; *Africa Research Bulletin*, June 1990, 9693.

⁴⁹ *West Africa*, 28 May-3 June, 877.

⁵⁰ John Wiseman and Elizabeth Vidler, "The July 1994 coup d'état in the Gambia: The end of an era," *Round Table* 333, no.1 (Jan 1995): 57.

Ndow Njie and the government conceded. For these 60 junior soldiers it was not enough to just receive their salary arrears, they also wanted someone to be held accountable for the delay.

The cases of the Ivoirian mutiny in 1990 and the Gambian mutiny in 1991 show a remarkable reconfiguration of power. In both incidents the mutineers were rank and file soldiers and were able to engage directly with the Head of State. In many states in previous decades it would have been inconceivable that junior ranks would take their issues directly to the president and even more shocking that the president would 'obey' these junior ranks. However, leading into the 1990s there were increasing expectations that governments would be responsive. Growing domestic opposition and changes to foreign relationships also put political leadership in a more vulnerable position and one in which they were more likely to grant concessions to the military. The power shift can also be seen in the way that both groups of mutineers made accusations against the top individual in the military structure. They show the belief that even an individual in a high position should not be above the standard regulations, signalling a major shift from previous decades when 'big men' were clearly above the law.

It is significant to note that the mutinies in Côte d'Ivoire in 1990 and Gambia in 1991 were the first time either country had experienced a mutiny. Therefore, it is unlikely that these soldiers had 'learned' to mutiny from other soldiers in their proximity but more likely that they picked up on common ideas expressed in the civilian sector, which in both cases had publicly protested just prior to the mutinies.

3.4 Borrowed Scripts

It was not only the general concepts that overlap between the democratization movement and mutinies; there were also similarities in the rhetoric used by mutineers and civilians. Soldiers in the 1990s seemed aware that military rule had lost its popularity and in public statements made during mutinies they attempted to distance

themselves from authoritarian regimes. For example, the spokesman for mutineers in Guinea Bissau in 1998 stated

We have already had the opportunity of stating on several occasions that we are soldiers, we do not want to become involved in politics... We do not claim the right to propose someone to be president of the Republic.⁵¹

Similarly, soldiers in Central African Republic in 1996 said that their mutiny was “corporatist” and “apolitical”. The mutineers’ spokesman, a Sergeant, explained to *Radio France International*

We made these demands from the barracks, but call to no avail. We have been forced to take to the streets. We have no intention of destabilizing the regime; President Patassé was democratically elected.⁵²

In a separate statement he urged the president “to take measures and prove he is a politician worthy of his office.”⁵³ He implied that to be ‘worthy’ of the position, the president must be responsive to their demands. Although the issues were not resolved and the mutinies continued for months, the soldiers continued to insist that their goals were not political. In an interview with RFI, Captain Saulet of Central African Republic, said

It is not our intention to stage a coup d’état, I think that is a problem that (could have been) solved within a matter of hours. It was not for nothing that the army took to the streets three times in the space of eight months. It means that there is a problem and we want this problem solved.”⁵⁴

Here the mutineers suggested that had they wanted to conduct a coup they could have done so easily, but instead they claim to be interested in working with political and military leadership to resolve the problem.

In some ways these statements may appear to be part of a history of African military personnel publicly commenting on politics. For example, coup leaders almost always justify their actions in relation to claims of failure amongst politicians.⁵⁵ However, in the above statements mutineers appear to want to signal a break from coup

⁵¹ *Africa Research Bulletin*, August 1998, 13226.

⁵² *West Africa*, April 29-May 5, 1996; 667.

⁵³ *West Africa*, April 29-May 5, 1996; 667.

⁵⁴ *West Africa*, January 1997, 89.

⁵⁵ Numerous examples can be found in A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, ‘Stay by your radios’: *Documentation for a study in military government in Tropical Africa*.

leaders and show their support for democratic leadership and the process that brought them to power or at least express their neutrality. Still, due to the mutineers' membership in an organization that has caused many problems for politicians in the region, their actions can be interpreted as a veiled threat. In other words, the mutineers may be implying that they are supportive of political leadership at that moment but the loyalty could be dependent on how their demands are handled.

The rhetoric of mutineers in the 1990s also showed signs of other traits commonly associated with democracy such as justice and human rights. The spokesman for the 1996 Central African Republic mutiny stated, "We appeal to Amnesty International, and we agree to stop [the mutiny] this Friday evening."⁵⁶ In this case the soldiers attempted to gain sympathy from a prominent international organization by implying that their three-month salary delay was a human rights violation. While Amnesty International did not take on their cause, the soldiers' call for their assistance showed an awareness of the growing international dialogue surrounding human rights and a creativity in how they could use the trend to their advantage.

In 1997 mutineers in Central African Republic included in their demands "an end to any hampering of collective and individual liberties, in particular body searches, arrests and house searches." This is an especially unusual request from soldiers as 'individual liberties' are to some degree forfeited when soldiers join the military. In particular, living spaces are often subject to inspection within a military context. These demands, which are somewhat contradictory to military procedures, reflect the growing attention towards civil liberties at the time. The comments also hint at the objection to arbitrary arrests and demonstrate ideas of the importance of following due legal processes.

Mutineers in Guinea Bissau in 1998 also addressed issues of rule of law. The spokesman for the mutiny commented about an ongoing arms trafficking scandal in which military members were accused of trafficking weapons to Casamance rebels by stating

We want those who stand accused in the report to be brought to trial.
Even if Brigadier Ansumane Mane himself is accused, he must be

⁵⁶ *West Africa*, April 29-May 5, 1996; 667.

brought to justice. We are for justice because the law must take its course. The law is above everything else, everyone, whoever they may be, must obey the law.⁵⁷

The soldiers in this case sound very similar to calls heard around the continent for justice and accountability for all levels of society, regardless of the paradox of having mutineers explain the need for obedience to the law.

Despite their increased rhetoric about justice and calls for accountability, mutineers did not want those standards to apply to their own actions. Mutineers in the 1990s appeared nervous about their post-mutiny prospects. This makes sense considering the lack of mutinies in the 1970s and 1980s meant that soldiers had few precedents for how mutineers would be treated by the law. To rectify this uncertainty about their status following the mutiny, mutineers began to add to their demands stipulations that they would not be held accountable for their actions when the mutiny ended. Soldiers in Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea all made deals with the government that gave them amnesty.

In addition to borrowing rhetoric from the democratization movement, in some cases mutineers also imitated the movement through their tactics. For example, Gambian soldiers in 1991 held a procession to State House while soldiers in Burkina Faso in 1997 marched to the Defence Ministry to make their complaints heard, both in very similar fashions to civilian protestors at the time. Mutineers in Burkina Faso in 1999 were reported to have chanted their demands, as is common during political protests.⁵⁸ In this particular case soldiers would have had regular exposure to civilian political protests because the mutiny occurred during a series of intense civilian protests against the Compaoré regime. Additionally, in the 1990s it became common for mutineers to assign a spokesperson for the group who would represent their cause to higher authorities and the media. This pattern is similar to political, student, and trade organizations that also regularly used spokespersons to articulate the goals of the group.

During the series of mutinies in the 1990s, politicians appeared growingly frustrated by mutinying soldiers who were increasingly acting and sounding like civilian

⁵⁷ *Africa Research Bulletin*, August 1998, 13226.

⁵⁸ *Associated Press*, "Soldiers End Burkina Faso Mutiny," July 16, 1999.

organizations. In many cases the public responses made by political leaders to the mutineers also expressed popular political themes. For example, in 1993 President Ousmane of Niger seemed exasperated by the mutineers and publicly reminded them that the army is not a political trade union and that they were obligated to obey the constitution.⁵⁹ Similarly, President Patassé of the Central African Republic expressed his frustration after months of ongoing mutinies by stating

The current rebellion is condemned by the country's entire population, respectful of the constitution, and through it, of the Republic's institutions. In my position as Supreme Chief of the Armed Forces, I could indeed have ordered military operations to bring this rebellion to an end, but it would have brought harm to the civilian population. Thus, I was patient. I issue two demands (to the mutineers): lay down your arms immediately and unconditionally.⁶⁰

He went on to state "I was not elected to shed the blood of Central Africans, whether they be from the north, south, east or west. I ask you to do nothing during these difficult times that might jeopardize national unity."⁶¹ In both of these examples the presidents, much like the mutineers, drew on wider political themes of the time. President Ousmane did not personally order the mutineers to end their campaign but rather highlighted the importance of the constitution as a governing document. President Patassé used more of an authoritative voice but still couched his authority within the context of having been popularly elected. He also drew on the need for the mutineers to respect the constitution and state institutions.

The importance of international organizations in the 1990s is revealed through statements made by both President Patassé and mutineers in Central African Republic in 1996 and 1997. In March, following the first set of mutinies Patassé commented

The army knows that in my negotiations with the IMF and World Bank I refused to reduce the number of soldiers in the army. However, I do understand them and that is why I am ready to go meet with them when calm returns, and calm is returning.⁶²

⁵⁹ *West Africa*, August 1, 1993, 1313.

⁶⁰ *West Africa*, December 1996, 1909.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *West Africa*, May 5, 1996, 667.

While in this statement Patassé sided with the military over the international monetary organizations, seven months later his attitude changed. In November of 1996 he stated

I have been watching things. I have been patient, lenient, and at times sympathetic. But from now on, things will be different. Certain compatriots still feel the need to try to scuttle the forthcoming negotiations with the Bretton Woods institutions by brandishing the specter of a third mutiny. There will be no third mutiny and no one had better take such a risk.⁶³

President Patassé emphasized the importance of international organizations by expressing his concern that the mutinies could impact upon negotiations with international organizations. He also implied that the soldiers were aware of the significance by suggesting that they were intentionally attempting to derail the process. Despite the president's hardened rhetoric, the mutinies did not end with this speech. After a year of ongoing mutinies, they were eventually brought to an end with the assistance of foreign troops and international negotiators. Among the final demands of the mutineers was the "continued existence of the international follow-up committee."⁶⁴

In August of 2002 Nigerien mutineers recited a claim that is popular amongst mutineers by stating, "we are not politicians, we are soldiers." On the surface this assertion is true; however the use of political rhetoric, which often drew on popular concepts, themes, and tactics of the democratization movement, politicized the mutinies even when their stated goals were not for political power. Similarly, political leaders often countered the mutineers with political language as presented above. In this dialogue, the actors (both mutineers and politicians or military superiors) seemed to be speaking above the problem. Layers of references to constitutions, good governance, democracy, human rights, international organizations, etc. have to be unveiled to get to the specific demands of the soldiers, which are generally similar to grievances from other eras. The political manner in which mutineers discussed their grievances during the 1990s appeared to be a product of the time period and the dominance of similar rhetoric in the civilian sector.

⁶³ *West Africa*, November 1996, 1705.

⁶⁴ *West Africa*, February 1997.

3.5 The Loose Boundaries Between Junior Ranks and Civilians

The above examples and the general argument that mutineers were inspired by popular political themes of the time raises the question of why the military did not join forces with the civilian movement. Given the earlier explanation of the military conditions in the 1980s and 1990s it would be fair to assume the military would be sympathetic towards the democratization movement. The military, especially its junior members, were suffering many of the same hardships as ordinary civilians and many of the calls for greater political liberties and respect for human rights would also benefit military members. However, instead the military often put down mass protests, with only a few notable exceptions such as Mali in 1991.

One explanation for why the military in most states did not become actively engaged in the democratization movement is that there had been a "virtual 'privatization' of key military units by incumbent dictators."⁶⁵ These militaries or units were directly loyal to the individual leaders. Bratton and Van de Walle expand on why this would be the case by stating

the armed forces often came to occupy a privileged position within the *ancien régime*. To keep the soldiers content and under some semblance of civilian control, rulers granted to individual officers and the military units a generous array of perks, privileges, and rewards, including access to rents and commercial ventures. Transitions from authoritarian rule threaten these benefits, not only because the greater transparency of a democratic regime may lead to pressures for the suspension of privileges, but also because the military must negotiate with a new and usually less sympathetic political elite.⁶⁶

For the elite members of the military a switch to new, democratic leadership could have meant an end to a good deal and for the rest of the military the uncertainty of the role of the military under civilian democratic leadership appeared to make them reluctant to jump on board with the movement.

⁶⁵ Hutchful, "Military Issues in the Transition to Democracy," 608.

⁶⁶ Bratton and Van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*, 244.

Hutchful argues that part of the blame for the reluctance of the military to join in must be placed on the democratization movement for failing to have a “clearly thought-out and articulated military policy.”⁶⁷ He states “this strategy needed to separate the military *institution* clearly from the military *regime* and to avoid lumping the two together, as the democracy movement tended to do.”⁶⁸ By “making wholesale attacks against the military” those that may have been sympathetic to the movement were driven “into the arms of the regime.”⁶⁹ Although there were large elements of the military that were not satisfied under the authoritarian regimes of the 1970s and 1980s they also did not have trust or confidence that their lot would be improved with the movement towards democracy. Instead the junior soldiers seemed to instrumentalize many of the themes of the democratization movement for their own campaigns. More examples of this will be given in the following section.

Popular input in political decision-making and expectations for accountable leadership are widely internationally accepted concepts within a civilian realm. However, these same concepts can be considered radical within a military context. Military hierarchies intentionally prohibit junior members from having a say in the decision making process. In the military, junior members are responsive to the orders of senior members; very rarely would it ever be the opposite pattern. For junior soldiers to demand that their seniors respond to their requests is what Rose calls “an unnatural and unsettling state for troops.”⁷⁰

This raises questions as to why the popular civilian ideas, which are “unnatural” in a military context would permeate the military sector. Militaries usually implement policies to separate its members from wider civilian society. For example, soldiers are typically housed on bases and required to wear uniforms and adhere to grooming standards which help unify the individuals but also separate them from civilians. In many militaries worldwide, the duties of a soldier would often not require day-to-day interaction with civilians. However, as the previous chapter described, the role of African militaries often put soldiers in direct contact with civilians on a daily basis,

⁶⁷ Hutchful, “Military Issues in the Transition to Democracy,” 609.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Rose, “The Anatomy of Mutiny,” 568.

through tasks such as manning checkpoints. African militaries were often closely linked to the head of state and his protection and therefore militaries often have a heavy presence in urban areas, particular capital cities. Urban areas and capital cities were also the forefront of civilian political protests and many soldiers would have been exposed to their grievances and actions. Lastly, it is very common for junior soldiers to live off base due to military housing shortages, which would mean these soldiers spend a lot of their time with civilians.

It is not only the employment duties and lifestyles that likely exposed soldiers to themes of the democratization movement; the avenues in which the messages were being spread also played a part. The ideas were spread through mediums in which soldiers would likely be exposed to. For example, religious organizations played an important counterweight to authoritarian regimes with 'political sermons' popular throughout the 1990s.⁷¹ Increases in shortwave radios, private radio stations, and private newspapers allowed civilians and military alike greater access to political messages than in previous decades and led to an easier transfer of information across state borders.⁷² Sections of the youth, both student organizations and unemployed urban youth, also served as important instigators for political reform. Paul Nugent explains that in the 1990s "nothing symbolized the erosion of government support more than the open contempt displayed by youth towards figures and symbols of authority."⁷³

While soldiers often have a contentious relationship with urban youth, we also must view junior soldiers as part of the same peer group who likely maintain personal links with students or urban youth. Although militaries often attempt to separate soldiers from the civilian population, the reality is that a large number of soldiers are youths, living in urban areas, listening to radios, and attending religious services in the same manner as much of the civilian population. It is therefore not surprising that many of the popular sentiments regarding democracy that were being expressed in the civilian population would also be picked up by soldiers.

⁷¹ Wiseman, *Democracy and Political Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 5; Nugent, *Africa Since Independence*, 2nd ed. 382.

⁷² Nugent, *Africa Since Independence*, 2nd ed. 389-392.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 389.

The often loosely defined boundaries between junior ranks and the civilian population was particularly clear to me when I spent weeks travelling with a young Sierra Leonean soldier (who helped facilitate my interviews). Whether or not to take on the role of a soldier or civilian was nearly a daily decision for this individual. We would discuss the daily plan and then he would decide whether or not to wear his uniform. If the plan involved travelling long distances the uniform was desirable so as to move through any checkpoints easier and to obtain the coveted front seat of the shared transport (which was usually offered to him when in uniform). However, for days in which there would be a lot of downtime away from base and no travel he seemed to prefer to wear civilian attire, presumably because his actions would be less scrutinized. This example demonstrates the way in which soldiers in the region can maintain a foot in both the civilian and military world and helps explain why messages may be easily spread between the two.

Hutchful observed a similar pattern of links between the junior ranks and civilian society within his research on junior ranks in Ghana. He notes “the further down the ladder of hierarchy one goes...the more likely that organizational boundaries will be breached.”⁷⁴ One reason is that junior ranks are less likely to have a substantial investment in the military status quo.⁷⁵ While Hutchful describes this pattern in the context of direct alliances between junior ranks (junior officers specifically) and political organizations, the same pattern applies more broadly to the popular political themes, which were spread from the civilian realm to junior military ranks during the 1990s. As the previous chapter explained, the junior ranks often attempt to balance a relationship with the civilian sector and the military hierarchy. Their behaviour during democratization demonstrates this; they borrowed themes, rhetoric, and tactics from civilians but for the most part never fully joined the democratization movement.

3.6 Freedom to Mutiny

⁷⁴ Hutchful, “Institutional Decomposition and Junior Ranks’ Political Action in Ghana,” 249.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 250.

So far this chapter has proposed that many of the popular themes and concerns that inspired civilians to take to the streets the 1990s also inspired soldiers to mutiny. While the economic situation and political climate of the 1990s may have created the perfect condition for mutinies, the link between civilian movements and mutinies is not limited to this period. Just as the pressure for democratic reform did not end in the 1990s, neither did mutinies. This section will demonstrate that the increased number of mutinies in the 1990s was not merely a result of a particular historic period, but rather part of a larger pattern of links between mutinies and democratic political systems. To examine this link I have used Freedom House's "Freedoms of the World index". This index, which has been produced annually since 1973, calculates scores for political rights and civil liberties and classifies countries into one of three categories: Free, Partially Free, or Not Free. While there is room to criticize how accurately democracy and freedoms can be calculated on a numeric scale, I have chosen this index to provide a general understanding of the level of political rights in a country at the time of the mutiny, rather than to calculate numeric correlations. This scale was chosen over similar indexes, such as the Mo Ibrahim index, due to the length of its existence, which allows for a more consistent comparison over time.

Of the fifty-three mutinies in the dataset that occurred between 1973 and 2012, thirty-eight took place in states that were ranked as either Free or Partially Free at the time of the mutiny and fifteen were ranked as Not Free. In other words, seventy-two percent of the mutinies took place in states that have some degree of respect for political rights and civil liberties. A closer look at specific country examples will help demonstrate the pattern.

Just as there were few mutinies during the authoritarian regimes that dominated the continent in the 1970s and 1980s, there still remain few mutinies in the authoritarian regimes that exist in the region today. For example, long-standing authoritarian regimes such as Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon have been free from mutinies. The Gambia serves as a particularly interesting example of how authoritarian political systems may deter mutinies. The Gambia has had a unique political trajectory with a reverse pattern of most states in the region. During the 1980s when authoritarian regimes were common, The Gambia was one of the few considered to be democratic. Yet, as many

states in the region have increased civil liberties and democratic political practices, The Gambia has done the opposite. It is currently one of the few countries in West Africa, which is labelled by Freedom House as “Not Free” consistently over the last couple years. While The Gambia had a series of mutinies in the 1990s, as the government has become increasingly repressive mutinies have ceased. Nearly everyone I interviewed about the potential for a near future mutiny in The Gambia felt that it was very unlikely, as President Jammeh would surely have any mutineers severely disciplined. Recent political executions in 2012 (the first officially in twenty-seven years), which included military members accused of plotting against Jammeh, served as a particular warning for the consequences of threatening state stability.⁷⁶ The current repressive nature of the state is not the sole reason for the lack of mutinies and the case study of The Gambia (Chapter Six) will further expand on this example.

The most recent mutinies on the continent also support the trend of mutinies occurring more often in states with democratic political systems. For example, mutinies took place in 2011 in Burkina Faso, which is ranked by Freedom House as “Partially Free,” and in 2012 in Mali, which at the time was ranked as “Free.” Sierra Leone has made considerable gains in political rights and civil liberties since the official end of its civil war in 2002. In 2013, for the first time, the country was listed as “Free” (elevated from previous years in which it was listed as “Partially free”). The increased political freedoms have not necessarily erased soldiers’ grievances and some soldiers interviewed in 2011 and 2012 warned that a future mutiny may be on the horizon. The interviewees explained how their confidence in the political and justice system increased their confidence in conducting a future successful mutiny. For example, one soldier explained that he felt a mutiny would be successful under the current political leadership because “There are accessible leaders who want to know, who have an interest, who will listen. They (senior officers) will be arrested and they will be jailed.”⁷⁷ This individual clearly believes the government will be responsive to their concerns, a shift from attitudes about the government in the 1990s, as will be elaborated in Chapter Five.

⁷⁶ “Gambia executions: Senegal Angry After Nationals Killed,” *BBC*, August 29, 2012.

⁷⁷ Author interview with Sierra Leonean junior soldier, May 2012.

The occurrence of mutinies across time as presented in Figure 1.2 (Chapter One) is similar to patterns of increased levels of democracy at global and regional levels, as observed by various scholars. Samuel Huntington described the worldwide pattern as waves with the second wave occurring from the end of World War II until the early 1960s and the third wave arriving in the 1990s.⁷⁸ Nugent, focusing on Africa specifically, uses the image of a swinging pendulum, which moved in the direction of nationalism and popular political participation in the 1960s, the opposite direction in the 1970s and 1980s and back with even more force towards popular political participation in the 1990s.⁷⁹ Mutinies also rose at the same times as the waves or pendulum reach their peak, and subsided as the momentum declined.

The pattern of mutinies occurring most often in states that have at least some respect for democratic principles is somewhat counterintuitive. It may seem logical that soldiers would revolt under a repressive system, however it is that system which would prohibit a successful mutiny. Mutinies require leadership that is willing to listen and respond, which is more likely under a democratic regime than an authoritarian one. Although it may be hard to convince leaders that they should be flattered by mutinying soldiers, mutinies do in some ways represent a level of faith in leadership to adequately address grievances. When soldiers have no faith that a leader will respond or the political system is so fragmented that there is no one to hear the complaints (such as in the midst of the civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia) mutinies become a pointless endeavour.

However it is not only the perceptions that democratic leaders are more responsive that may make soldiers in democratic countries more prone to mutinies; the civil liberties often associated with democratic political systems work to the advantage of mutineers. Increased freedoms of media in particular provide soldiers, as well as civilians, with new tools to express their grievances. As previously mentioned, media in Africa in the 1970s and into the 1980s was often state-controlled.⁸⁰ During this time

⁷⁸ Samuel Huntington, "Democracy's Third Wave," *Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 12-34.

⁷⁹ Nugent, *Africa Since Independence*, 2nd ed., 376.

⁸⁰ Adebayo Olukoshi "State, Conflict, and Democracy in Africa: The Complex Process of Renewal," in *State Conflict and Democracy in Africa*, ed. Richard Joseph (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999): 454.

the media was typically a “one-way operation” with “people being spoken to, not listened to.”⁸¹ However, this began to change in the 1990s as one country after another introduced legislation that gave local press the freedoms it lacked in previous decades.⁸² The increased media freedoms were partially a result of the democratization movement but were also used to further pressure political reform. The new freedoms of media allowed reporters (however not without risk) to “reveal what [was] going on behind the well draped windows of public institutions.”⁸³ There was increased public scrutiny of political figures and government procedures, with growing attention towards corruption.⁸⁴

While not all states have progressed in an equal fashion towards increased media freedoms, generally speaking there have been more privatized media and more access to international media from the 1990s onward than in previous decades. The increased privatization of media sources as well as introduction of new forms of media has resulted in more interactive media, allowing messages to move “downwards, upwards, and sideways.”⁸⁵

Mutineers began to utilize this more interactive media to work around their chain of command and in some cases to connect with the international community and the civilian population. Prior to the 1990s there were few examples of mutineers making radio announcements (one of the only cases was in Democratic Republic of Congo in 1966 when soldiers attempted to overtake the radio station). However, as media freedoms increased in the 1990s, soldiers turned more and more to the media during mutinies, a trend which continues into the present time. There are also times in which mutineers did not seek out media attention but the reverse pattern occurred, with media outlets approaching mutineers. During mutinies in Burkina Faso in 2011 news outlets

⁸¹ Goran Hyden and Michael Leslie, “Communications and Democratization in Africa,” in *Media and Democracy in Africa*, eds., Goran Hyden, Michael Leslie and Folu F. Ogundimu (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2002): 4.

⁸² Ibid., 11.

⁸³ Ibid., 12.

⁸⁴ Hyden and Leslie, “Communications and Democratization in Africa,” 12; Goran Hyden and Charles Okigbo, “The Media and the Two Waves of Democracy,” in *Media and Democracy in Africa*, eds., Goran Hyden, Michael Leslie and Folu F. Ogundimu (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2002): 48.

⁸⁵ Hyden and Leslie, “Communications and Democratization in Africa,” 5.

sought out mutineers for statements, a trend that will likely continue as international and local media organizations compete for new angles to stories.

In the past several years there is a trend of disgruntled soldiers providing their story to the media in hopes that a threat to mutiny will be enough to resolve their complaints. The previous chapter described a scenario in which Nigerian soldiers in 2012 contacted the media to threaten their leaders with a pending mutiny. A similar tactic was used by Sierra Leonean soldiers deployed to Somalia in 2013, as Chapter Five will detail. Additionally, in March 2013, the Malian newspaper, *Le Républicain*, published an open letter claiming to represent the “other soldiers” (meaning the ones not involved in the 2012 coup) to the president. In the letter they questioned whether one needs to commit a coup to be compensated and recognized as a good soldier. They provided a two-week deadline to annul the salary of Captain Sanogo (leader of the 2012 coup) or they would cease to fight (in the North) and were prepared to suffer the consequences.⁸⁶

In reporting of mutinies in the 1960s through the 1980s the opinions of civilians in relation to mutinies is absent. There is no indication of how they viewed the actions of soldiers. However, this began to change in the 1990s with privatized media that published more opinion pieces and letters to the editor. It has changed even more drastically in recent years with increasing internet access allowing nearly anyone to publicly comment on events.

Likely to the chagrin of political and military leadership, the opinions in the media often took the side of the mutineers. For example, following a mutiny in Niger in 2002 a local newspaper published the following

When the mutiny first occurred, it is crucial to ask Mr. President why salaries of soldiers have not been paid for a good five months. What does the government expect mutineers to live on and survive? True, mutiny is an offense everywhere. But why is mutiny an offense for soldiers and government officials’ remissness and irresponsibility not an offense? This is the root of the problem.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ *Le Républicain* published the letter on their website <http://www.lerepublicain-mali.com/?q=node/225>. Translation and analysis by Bruce Whitehouse from his blog entry on March 6, 2013 titled “The north, the army, and the junta,” <http://bridgesfrombamako.com/2013/03/06/north-army-junt/>

⁸⁷ *Africa Research Bulletin*, July 2002, 14972-14975.

There was additional criticism within the media, civil society, and opposition when President Tandja declared a state of emergency following the mutinies which restricted civil liberties, particularly press freedoms.⁸⁸ Journalists who reported on the story were arrested, leading to international attention.⁸⁹ The Constitutional Court ruled against Tandja and declared that he did not have the authority to make the decree.⁹⁰ Civilians stayed engaged with the mutineers' cause and staged a sit-in in front of the Congress Palace in Niamey where the African Commission of Human and People's Rights was being held to protest that over 200 mutineers had been held in jail for nearly a year without trial.⁹¹ In this case the media was actively involved in publicizing the event, as well as critiquing the government's response. The mutiny concerned pay and living conditions, as well as complaints over particular officers; however it took on larger proportions when civilian organizations used the government response to question the powers of the president and state of civil liberties. While the media attention may not have earned the soldiers the lower meal prices in the army dining halls that they had initially demanded, their plight was given international attention. For example, Amnesty International wrote about their concern for the 230 mutineers who had been jailed without trial.⁹²

The case of media coverage of the mutiny in The Gambia in 1992 reveals the differences between government run media and private media coverage for the same event. Following the 1992 mutiny the private newspapers, *The Point* and *Foroyaa*, reported extensively on the event, including editorials, which criticized both the government and the soldiers. *The Point* claimed to represent the voice of the local population when it wrote

Without in any way seeking to prejudice the proceedings of the court-martial, it is to be said, as the public is already saying, that while the actions of the 35 privates is to be condemned, having regard to the kind of discipline expected from the army, it must also be pointed out that they

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Committee to Protect Journalists, "CJP Concerned about climate for independent journalism," September 4, 2002; IRIN, "Niger: Second journalist arrested over mutiny reports," August 28, 2002.

⁹⁰ *Africa Research Bulletin*, September 2002, 14999.

⁹¹ *Africa Research Bulletin*, May 2003, 15317.

⁹² *Amnesty International Report 2004- Niger*, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/40b5a1fd8.html>

should not have been given the chance for this repeat performance through nonpayment of any part of their allowance, however small.⁹³

Foroyaa took the mutiny as an opportunity to criticize the Peoples' Progressive Party (PPP) government. Below the story of the mutiny they included the following under a title "Foroyaa's Comment:" "PPP does not respond to the rights and entitlements of its people. Urge citizens to vote them out of office in upcoming election."⁹⁴ Like the example in Niger, the mutiny became an example of government mismanagement in the eyes of civilian opposition. The Gambia had a government run newspaper at the time, alongside the private news sources. The government newspaper, *The Gambia Weekly*, did not report on the mutiny or mention any military indiscipline. Instead the week following the mutiny, as if to counter the potentially negative media, the paper reported on plans for a military parade in which the President would provide medals to soldiers for "long and dedicated service to the nation."⁹⁵ The parade story was too mundane for any other news outlets to report. This contrast of public versus private media reporting of the same event helps show that without private media it is unlikely that mutinies would gain the attention they desire. However, it is difficult to tell if the mutineers benefitted from this press coverage, although they were eventually paid their dues.

An example of where mutineers likely benefitted from media attention is the case of a mutiny in Nigeria in 2008. In this case, which will be further described in the next chapter, mutineers were given harsh sentences while their officers, who were determined to have 'misappropriated' rank and file salary funds, received no punishment. Following numerous letters to the editors, and online postings, the military announced revisions to the mutineers' sentences.⁹⁶

This section has shown that mutinies most often occur within states that show some respect for political freedoms and civil liberties. Increased press freedoms and access to media in the 1990s and onward in many ways assisted mutineers. They began

⁹³ *The Point*, February 10, 1992.

⁹⁴ *Foroyaa*, February 15, 1992.

⁹⁵ *The Gambia Weekly*, February 21, 1992.

⁹⁶ Examples of forums discussing the topic include Nairaland Forum and Nigerian Village Square. Additionally the following article discusses public opinion on the issue: Senator Iroegbu, "Nigerian Army Pardons Akure 27," *This Day*, December 3, 2010; Juliana Taiwo, "Mutiny: Army retired indicted senior officers," *NigeriaWorld*, October 21, 2009.

to use media outlets as a way to express their grievances around their chain of command and gain wider attention for their cause. The increased attention also highlighted due legal processes for mutineers, as the examples from Niger and Nigeria demonstrate.

However, with increased presence and types of media rarely does one actor (for example the government or mutineers) fully control the flow of information. Instead the more interactive style of media, which in some ways gives the mutineers a voice, also limits the ability of the mutineers to control their message. As the examples of Niger, Gambia, and Nigeria demonstrate, civilians have become increasingly involved in reporting on mutinies and providing their opinions about the event. While this can have advantages for the mutineers, it also makes it easier for their cause to be used by opposition political groups or others wishing to discredit the government or military leadership. The case study of Burkina Faso, Chapter Seven, will show ways in which media aimed at popular culture has also become engaged in telling the mutineers' story.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that mutinies in the 1990s can be seen as a way to gauge the impact international economic and political changes had on rank and file soldiers and also demonstrates a way they responded to the effects. I have proposed that soldiers in the 1990s were not immune to the political currents of the time, even if they were regularly seen as suppressing the movement. Issues that were prominent in the civilian sector, such as awareness of corruption and demands for accountability, were also key themes in mutinies. Just as "ordinary citizens" in the 1990s began to "exert a high degree of control over leaders," so did rank and file soldiers through increased mutinies.⁹⁷ Mutineers in the 1990s also used similar rhetoric and tactics as those in the civilian sector who were pushing for democratic reform. The attitude of the military towards the democratization movement is not one of complete support or disregard, but rather a more nuanced relationship. Hutchful may be correct in his assessment that the

⁹⁷ Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory: Expanded Edition*, 3.

democracy movement “lost the battle for the military;” however I have suggested in this chapter that the movement was not lost on the rank and file soldiers.⁹⁸

This chapter has shown that mutinies most often occur in states with some respect for political freedoms and civil liberties, a pattern that extends beyond the 1990s. Mutineers do not just desire responsive leadership; they require it for success. Thus democratic leaders, who are typically more responsive than authoritarian leaders make better negotiating partners for mutineers. Additionally, mutineers benefitted from the democratization movements in the 1990s and the democratic reforms that have persisted in some states today. While mutineers in the 1990s were usually not outright demanding civil liberties, such as press freedoms, they quickly utilized these liberties once they came into existence.

⁹⁸ Hutchful, “Military Issues in the Transition to Democracy,” 608.

Chapter Four- Peacekeeping Abroad, Trouble Making at Home

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed how the end of the Cold War marked a change in international strategic relationships and foreign military assistance; it also coincided with a rapid increase in peacekeeping missions. The United Nations (UN) established twenty missions between 1989 and 1994, which accounted for more than the previous forty years of missions combined.¹ In addition to the UN, regional organizations became involved in peacekeeping. West and Central African states increasingly contributed troops to peacekeeping missions and most states remain committed to various missions today. This chapter will demonstrate how the increase in mutinies from the 1990s onward can partially be attributed to increases in deployments throughout the region, particularly deployments on multinational missions. There have been a range of studies that demonstrate unintended consequences of peacekeeping missions, on the local civilian population, the peacekeepers, and the conflict in general; yet, mutinies following deployments are a trend that has not yet received attention.²

Of the sixty-six mutinies examined in the dataset, twenty percent involved grievances related to deployments. However, not all deployments appear to spark mutinies at an equal rate. Of the thirteen incidents of mutinies related to deployments, ten cases (or seventy-seven percent) involved deployments on multinational peace operations and three involved internal deployments. This chapter first discusses why recently deployed troops may be especially prone to mutiny. Afterwards, I show that there are traits unique to multinational peace operations, which may contribute to grievances among soldiers who participate in the missions and ultimately lead to mutinies.

¹ The United Nations Peacekeeping, Post Cold War Surge, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/surge.shtml>

² One example is Chiyuki Aoi, Cedric de Coning, and Ramesh Thakur, eds. *Unintended Consequences of Peacekeeping Operations*, (New York: United Nations University Press, 2007).

Various mutiny scholars have described “implicit contracts” or “social contracts” between soldiers and their superiors where “in exchange for obedience, the chain of command will see to the needs of its personnel and ensure that they are well cared for.”³ Being a soldier is often viewed as more than just a job since it potentially involves high risks, includes lifestyle restrictions, and is legally binding. In return, soldiers expect more than just pay. They often expect housing, subsidized food, uniforms, and training. If soldiers feel that their superiors are not fulfilling these expectations, they are more likely to renege on their obligation to obey orders and follow the chain of command. While this pattern can apply to mutinies in general, this chapter will show why deployments in particular often alter the contract between soldiers and their superiors.

Like most contracts, the ones between soldiers and their chain of command shift depending on the workload. When stationed at home both sides may be more lax about the agreement or find alternative ways to meet the demands. For example, it is common for West and Central African soldiers to take on small side jobs that their bosses overlook or soldiers may be assigned to positions that could supplement their salaries (such as working check points where bribes are frequently given). When soldiers are deployed, the contract shifts because a deployment is where soldiers are seen to be most earning their dues. As this chapter will demonstrate, soldiers’ expectations of what they are owed by the command increase on a deployment along with the risks of the job. Deployment on multinational missions often further heightens soldiers’ expectations as they are able to compare their conditions to those of soldiers from other states in the region. However, it is more difficult for superiors to ‘take care of’ soldiers on a deployment due in part to increased needs (equipment, logistics, etc.) that do not necessarily coincide with increased funds. As this chapter will show, the hierarchy often fails to meet the heightened expectations of deployed soldiers, thus breaking the understood contract.

³ Quote from Christopher Ankersen, “Beyond Mutiny? – Instrumental and Expressive Understandings of Contemporary ‘Collective Indiscipline’” in *The Unwilling and the Reluctant: Theoretical Perspectives on Disobedience in the Military*, ed. Craig Leslie Mantle (Ontario, Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2006): 121; topic also discussed in Rachel Lea Heide, “After the Emergency: Demobilization Strikes, Political Statements, and the Moral Economy in Canada’s Air Forces, 1919-1946,” in *The Insubordinate and the Noncompliant: Case Studies of Canadian Mutiny and Disobedience, 1920 to Present*, ed. Howard G. Coombs (Ontario, Canadian Defense Academy Press, 2007): 178-179.

4.2 Value-Added Deployments

Although militaries are trained to engage in combat, in West and Central Africa deployment to a combat zone is infrequent for most soldiers. With interstate conflict a rarity in the region, most combat deployments will not involve traditional military to military engagement but instead require “non-traditional” missions such as counter insurgency, counterterrorism, etc. These types of missions are difficult for even the best trained and equipped forces. West and Central African militaries are often further disadvantaged in these missions by outdated equipment, lack of basic supplies, and logistical shortfalls, as the examples below will demonstrate.

Old complaints take on a new level of importance when they occur in a deployment setting. Soldiers commonly grumble about not having equipment or uniforms while in the barracks but these concerns become more significant when a soldier is deployed. Outdated equipment is of little relevance in the day-to-day lives of soldiers who do not need it to survive. Yet, when in combat outdated equipment or lack of supplies such as ammunition can be the difference between life and death. The case study of a planned mutiny in Sierra Leone, as detailed in the next chapter, will demonstrate this point. The mutiny was planned while the soldiers were deployed to counter rebel forces and their complaints included lack of equipment, uniforms, boots, food, medical care, and inconsistent pay. These were not necessarily new complaints; the government had long been neglecting the military. However, these issues had more severe consequences for the soldiers who were deployed. One soldier from the deployed unit explained that the group was “demoralized every time we go to battle” due to the lack of supplies and support.⁴ The old complaints led to new complications on the ground for deployed soldiers (including casualties within the unit) and severely altered their attitudes towards the mission and their chain of command, which ultimately led the soldiers to make a decision to mutiny to rectify the situation.

⁴ Author interview with military source I (current officer), May 2011.

The heightened risks associated with deployments also leads to a heightened sense of entitlement. Soldiers on deployment or returned from deployment believe they are due more from the government or military hierarchy as a result of their experience. Soldiers with combat experience revise their criteria of what is acceptable pay based on the risks involved. For example, a Sierra Leonean soldier involved in the mutiny plan in 1992 commented, "the pay was very much low. That is the reason we decided to take over the government. Soldiers just get 10,000 [leones] a month and you sacrifice your life for the nation."⁵ Similarly a Gambian former soldier discussing the 1991 and 1992 mutinies stated "soldiers felt that they were in Liberia risking their lives and still the amount of money they were expecting was not reaching them...they were exposed to danger and...they don't get the money they expected."⁶ In these quotes the soldiers explain that the problem was not only an issue of pay, rather the pay issues combined with the risks of the mission made the situation unacceptable. Lastly, in an interview with a current Sierra Leonean soldier about ongoing deployments to the Darfur missions he commented, "If I go to Sudan, I risk my life and only get \$400, my life is worth more than that."⁷ He shows that there is a recalculation of what a soldier is entitled to depending on the conditions. To this individual the bonus deployment pay was still not enough to justify the potential danger. He was not saying that he was refusing to go to Sudan, just did not want to go for the current pay. His language sounds much more like an individual negotiating terms of a contract than that of a soldier fulfilling duties of the job. As these examples show, danger is considered a chargeable experience and the soldiers expect to be compensated for it.

Increased expectations following deployments is not unique to West or Central African militaries and parallels can be drawn in the civilian sector. Most military personnel that deploy, especially to a combat zone, expect supplemental pay (often called hazard pay). Similarly, even non-military personnel expect that added responsibilities in their employment would also come with added pay or benefits.

⁵ Author interview with military source L (current enlisted soldier) May 2011; In 1992 the conversion rate for leones to U.S. dollars averaged 499 to 1. Therefore, 10,000 leones a month would be roughly \$20.

⁶ Author interview with military source C (former enlisted soldier) October 2012.

⁷ Author interview with military source S (current rank and file soldier) May 2011; The "\$400" is not converted, the interviewee spoke about the pay in U.S. dollars.

Soldiers in nearly any professional military count on appropriate provisions when deployed. The demands made by deployed or post-deployed soldiers in this region are not necessarily unusual; what seems to cause the trend of mutinies in this region is the inability of governments to meet common expectations of deployed soldiers. States are often unable to fund the military missions or there is misappropriation of the funds (or both). This trend will be discussed more specifically in relation to multinational missions below.

The hardships and sacrifices of a deployment also lead to a sense of entitlement in a more abstract way. There seems to be an expectation that in addition to added pay, soldiers that have deployed deserve increased respect for having endured the mission. This was a subtler trend that I noticed during field research. In addition to formal interviews, I engaged with a wide variety (in terms of both ranks and nationalities) of soldiers in a more casual setting and noted that soldiers were very quick to tell me about any deployment they had been on. Guinean soldiers talked extensively about their experiences on the ECOMOG missions to Liberia and Sierra Leone and similarly Malian soldiers openly discussed their time deployed against the rebellion in the northern part of their country. On several occasions during interviews in Sierra Leone, soldiers made a point to show me physical scars from their deployments. One officer took his uniform shirt off to show me a particularly severe scar from a bullet to the chest and a subsequent surgery. It demonstrated a pride not only in the deployment but in the combat and physical danger associated with the experience. He also directly used this experience to justify his involvement in overthrowing President Momoh in 1992 by explaining that the government did not take care of the wounded. To him, the government had not fulfilled its responsibility to veterans, thus breaking the implicit contract.

A heightened level of respect for veterans was also apparent in the language used by interviewees. When soldiers would tell me about their military colleagues, friends, or relatives they would often add descriptors about the person's deployment experiences. For example, in Sierra Leone young soldiers would commonly describe someone as "battle-tested" or "battle-hardened." It was always said with admiration. As previously stated, traditional military combat is infrequent in the region and thus having combat

experience is something that makes soldiers stand out among their comrades in many states.

Additionally, my conversations with soldiers indicated that there is solidarity among soldiers from various countries that those engaged in combat deserve better treatment. While I was conducting field research in West Africa in 2012 there were two coups in the region (Mali and Guinea Bissau). In casual conversations with soldiers in Guinea and Sierra Leone, there was overwhelming support for the actions of the Malian soldiers. They commented that the Malian soldiers were justified because the government was not taking care of them in their fight against rebels in the northern part of the country. Interestingly, Sierra Leonean soldiers did not have the same sympathy for the soldiers in Guinea Bissau and made dismissive comments about how they are always acting up.⁸ The fact that the Malian soldiers' initial complaints were over deployment conditions seemed to win them sympathy among other West African soldiers.

Olonisakin's interviews with Nigerian peacekeepers following the ECOMOG mission to Liberia reveal similar findings to my own. She explains that when the peacekeepers returned home there was a strain between them and their comrades at home. She notes

[the peacekeepers'] views were influenced largely by their experience during [peace] enforcement. Believing themselves to have been 'battle-tested' by the Liberian mission, many of them considered their contemporaries at home 'inexperienced.' Indeed, some considered themselves to be not only better soldiers than their own contemporaries, but also superior to many officers at home who had no experience in battle.⁹

This universality of heightened respect for combat veterans can be linked to issues of honour, as described by Iliffe. He uses Frank Hendersen Stewart's definition of honour as a 'right to respect.'¹⁰ Iliffe explains that groups determine the criteria for honour. Stratified groups typically experience vertical honour, in which special respect

⁸ I do not have the perspective of Guinea soldiers on the coup in Guinea Bissau because it occurred after I had left Guinea.

⁹ Funmi Olonisakin, *Reinventing Peacekeeping in Africa: Conceptual and Legal Issues in ECOMOG Operations* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2000): 205.

¹⁰ Iliffe, *Honour in African History*, 4.

is awarded to those of superior rank.¹¹ Within a military context, the 'group' seems to largely agree that endurance of combat deployments is honourable and deserves heightened respect. Additionally, combat experiences often appear to give soldiers a heightened spot within the vertical honour structure, even if they hold a seemingly junior rank. This observation will be furthered in the case study of Sierra Leone.

When the hierarchy treats combat veterans poorly, it is viewed as a particular insult. Soldiers implied that there was a level of tolerance when soldiers in the barracks are paid late, but it was not acceptable for combat veterans to be treated that way. Post-deployment mutinies can serve as a way to defend the honour soldiers feel they deserve.

Thus far I have described how deployments create new conditions in which soldiers can find grievances and a new sense of their own entitlement within the military structure due to the increased sacrifices that come with a deployment. The link between deployments and mutinies may also be partially understood by examining how a deployment alters the dynamics of the unit. In the most basic sense, deployed soldiers are physically separated from the military hierarchy. Units may feel freer to discuss or plan a mutiny away from the watchful eyes of their senior hierarchy. Soldiers from Ghana (1961), Sierra Leone (1992), and Nigeria (2000, 2012), planned or carried out a mutiny while away on deployment.

Beyond the issue of distance from their home bases, deployment on combat missions often leads to strong group cohesion. Although definitions vary, generally strong cohesion involves trust among group members and the capacity for teamwork.¹² During combat deployments "members are immediately known to each other and their actions are interdependent, mutually supporting, and reciprocal."¹³ Soldiers deployed together are in constant contact with each other, not only during intense combat situations, but also during the long mundane downtime, which inevitably occurs on deployments. In more recent years with the increase in peacekeeping deployments, units

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Guy L. Siebold, "The Essence of Military Group Cohesion," *Armed Forces & Society* 33, No. 2 (Jan. 2007): 288.

¹³ Anthony King, *The Combat Soldier: Infantry Tactics and Cohesion in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): 18.

will often spend months together prior to the deployment in preparatory training.¹⁴ These shared experiences of hardships as well as the consistent close proximity often create close interpersonal bonds between members of the unit which may be absent when stationed at home.

Military scholars regularly discuss cohesion in relation to its ability to create more efficient and motivated units. Anthony King explains that there is a common presumption that the close personal relationships formed within cohesive units “generate good performances because it motivates the individual members to fight.”¹⁵ However he draws on various studies that also show another side of cohesion, one that can motivate individuals into deviant behaviour together. The close bonds can cause the group to subvert or ignore their authorities as well as their obligation to the organization. Guy Siebold explains that highly cohesive units may be particularly likely to disobey orders when “peer bonding is strong and bonding with leaders is poor.”¹⁶ This pattern is likely to be the case in West and Central African militaries as there are often large divisions between the rank and file soldiers and their superiors, particularly senior officers (as explained in Chapter Two). The deployment experience can increase the peer bonding as well as the divisions between the ranks, increasing the likelihood of disobedience. King cites cases of Western mutinies (French and Australian troops during WWI and American troops during the Vietnam War) among his various examples of deviant military behaviour among combat units.¹⁷ African combat related mutinies can also be added to this list of deviant behaviour, which is likely affected by increased group cohesion.

Mutinies embody a unique dynamic in that they require both a strong bond within the group as well as a level of detachment from the larger organization. Mutineers put a high degree of trust into their fellow mutineers as they must have faith that the groups will stick together during negotiations or a potential counter attack. As Chapter Two explained, this cohesion is often difficult to maintain and the group regularly

¹⁴ In earlier iterations of peacekeeping deployments specific training for the mission was less common.

¹⁵ King, *The Combat Soldier: Infantry Tactics and Cohesion in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*, 31.

¹⁶ Siebold, “The Essence of Military Group Cohesion,” 293.

¹⁷ King, *The Combat Soldier: Infantry Tactics and Cohesion in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*, 32.

experiences internal divisions, which can quickly result in mass violence. However, deployment related mutinies are often among the most organized and contained mutinies in the dataset. Their complaints are generally specific to the unit and their own experiences on the deployment and therefore they do not as easily allow for a contagion effect. Deployment related mutinies are also among the most successful mutinies in the dataset. This is likely due to the cohesion formed during the deployment. These units have presumably planned and conducted missions together and this shared skill set comes in useful in mutinies. The case study of Sierra Leone will show an example of a unit that clearly utilized their experiences together on the battlefield to plan and orchestrate a revolt against senior leadership.

Shared deployment experiences often create the necessary group cohesion as well as feelings of division, isolation, and dissatisfaction from the larger military hierarchy. They can also create divisions between those in the military that have experienced the hardships versus those that have not. This division was highlighted with earlier examples of soldiers identifying others as “battle-tested.” The division between those that have deployed and those that have not also largely follows the rank structure as combat deployment consists mostly of rank and file soldiers, led by junior officers. Senior officers are much less likely to engaged in combat. This division builds on the economic divisions between the junior ranks and senior officers described in Chapter Two.

The case of Sierra Leone in 1992 exemplifies the trend of deployments creating both cohesion and division. When soldiers overthrew the government after battling rebels in eastern Sierra Leone they regularly brought up the lack of experience of their senior officers (and government officials). In Captain Strasser’s first speech as president he stated “our soldiers continue to sacrifice their lives on the war front in spite of very poor logistic support provided by the government, whose leadership sit in Freetown enriching themselves by gross misappropriation of war funds.” Another speech explains that “while our men were dying at the war front to liberate our country” their superiors were “plundering” in Freetown.¹⁸ In these accounts the soldiers want to not only

¹⁸ *West Africa*, May 11, 1992.

discredit their seniors but to do so in comparison to their own self-proclaimed meritorious actions.

This section has shown that combat deployments alter soldiers' perceptions of their conditions and their value within the military. With the increased hardship and sacrifice, soldiers often expect the government to reciprocate with increased pay or provisions. The deployment experience may also create new bonds within the unit while intensifying feelings of divisions from the larger hierarchy, a dynamic which is conducive to mutiny.

4.3 Increased Complications of Multinational Missions

As earlier noted, the vast majority of mutinies related to deployments occur following multinational missions. This section will examine why this type of deployment is particularly prone to spark mutinies. Most of the missions discussed in this section are a type of Peace Support Operation (PSO) and thus the individuals involved will be referred to as peacekeepers.¹⁹ However, this analysis will place more emphasis on the multinational aspect of the mission than the particular type of peace operation. It is likely that even missions that are more interventionist but multinational would be susceptible to many of the patterns outlined in this chapter.

There is a wide spectrum of peace support operations, some of which occur in the midst of conflict (peace enforcement missions), while others occur after a cease-fire has been reached (peacekeeping missions).²⁰ However, as the UN doctrine points out, the line between the various types of operations is often blurred and mission mandates can change.²¹ Nearly all the multinational missions described in this chapter involve operations to regions in which conflict was ongoing or where there was a high probability that the unit encountered combat. This is part of a trend that has emerged in recent decades in which regional peacekeepers are the first to deploy to a conflict zone

¹⁹ For various categories of UN peace operations and details on their overlap see "United Nations Operations: Principles and Guidelines", 2008, 17-20.

²⁰ "United Nations Operations: Principles and Guidelines", 2008, 17-20.

²¹ Ibid.

and later often “rehatted” into a more multi-national and better resourced (usually) UN mission.²² This pattern has occurred in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d’Ivoire, and most recently, Mali.²³ Regional organization are often first to arrive in a conflict because they can deploy more rapidly and have a better understanding of the operational environment. However, as ‘Funmi Olonisakin points out, this trend has led to some criticism that “Africans give the blood and the UN takes the glory.”²⁴ The combat aspect of these missions is significant to understanding the reasons for the mutiny. The combat situation alters the dynamic of the group and the way they view their own worth to the organization, as described in the previous section. Additionally, the logistical and material shortfalls, which this section will describe, were more than just frustrations; they became life-threatening for the peacekeepers on the ground. The areas in which the soldiers found fault were often at least partially caused by the complexity of the multinational aspect of the mission, as will be elaborated on below.

This section will pay particular attention to the multinational missions to Liberia, which began as an ECOWAS mission in 1990 and continues as a UN mission today.²⁵ At least seven mutinies from soldiers in five different countries have occurred following involvement in the Liberia missions (see Figure 4.1 below).²⁶ However, the Liberia missions were not the only multinational missions related to mutinies. Others include Ghanaian troops during the United Nations led mission to Congo (ONUC) in 1961 and soldiers from Burkina Faso (1999) and Côte d’Ivoire (1999) following the UN led mission to Central African Republic (MINURCA). The mutinies following the MINURCA mission were rather ironic considering the mission was developed to assist in the instability following military mutinies by Central African Republic forces. Although outside the dataset time frame, Chadian soldiers in 2013 mutinied due to the

²² ‘Funmi Olonisakin, “Lessons Learned from an Assessment of Peacekeeping and Peace Support Operations in West Africa,” Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, 2008, 17.

²³ The case of Mali is slightly different from the others because French troops were deployed alongside regional troops from the beginning of the mission.

²⁴ Olonisakin, “Lessons Learned from an Assessment of Peacekeeping and Peace Support Operations in West Africa,” 17.

²⁵ There was a break in the mission between 1998 and 2003, which coincides with when the first civil war ended and the second began.

²⁶ ECOWAS deployed troops to Liberia on two occasions. The first was from 1990-1998. During the second Liberian civil war ECOWAS deployed troops again but this mission was soon converted into a UN mission.

conditions of the UN mission to Mali (MINUSMA). This trend can also be seen in other regions of Africa as evidenced by a mutiny in 2009 among Burundian soldiers involved in the African Union mission in Somalia (AMISOM).²⁷

Figure 4.1 Multinational mission related mutinies in West and Central Africa

Mutineers' country	Year of Mutiny	Multinational Mission
Ghana	1961	ONUC (Congo)
Gambia	1991	ECOMOG (Liberia)
Gambia	1992	ECOMOG (Liberia)
Guinea	1996	ECOMOG (Liberia)
Burkina Faso	1999	MINURCA (CAR)
Côte d'Ivoire	1999	MINURCA (CAR)
Benin	2000	ECOMOG (Liberia/Guinea Bissau)
Nigeria	2000	ECOMOG (Liberia/Sierra Leone)
Guinea Bissau	2004	ECOMOG/UNMIL (Liberia)
Nigeria	2008	UNMIL (Liberia)

Of the numerous multinational missions that have involved West and Central African troops, one must question why the initial ECOWAS mission (1990-1998) to Liberia has led to such a disproportionate number of post-deployment mutinies. In some ways the problems can be attributed to the fact that the mission was unprecedented in many ways. It was the first time a regional organization in Africa had undertaken a major peacekeeping initiative and it was the first time for a regional organization mission to take place alongside a UN mission.²⁸ Simply put, this mission was particularly difficult and disorganized and the brunt of the problems fell on the soldiers on the ground (and of course the civilians they were meant to protect). A brief summary of the mission will help illustrate some of the problems. This section will focus mostly

²⁷ BBC, "Burundi Peacekeepers on Trial Over Somalia Mutiny," February 5, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/8499975.stm>

²⁸ Olonisakin, "Lessons Learned from an Assessment of Peacekeeping and Peace Support Operations in West Africa," 46.

on the ground conditions of the mission and will be followed in the next section by pay concerns. Part of the complication during the Liberia operations, which contributed to mutinies, was the overlap between ECOWAS and UN missions on the ground. The below chart serves to briefly differentiate the various multinational missions to Liberia.

Figure 4.2 ECOWAS and UN Peace Support Operations to Liberia, 1990-Present²⁹

Organization	Mission Title	Years
ECOWAS	ECOMOG	1990-1998
UN	UNOMIL	1993-1997
ECOWAS	ECOMIL*	2003
UN	UNMIL	2003-present

* ECOWAS soldiers were ‘rehatted’ to UNMIL mission

Although international peace operations increased dramatically following the end of the Cold War, the international community was not initially interested in becoming involved in the deteriorating security situation in Liberia. By 1989 the National Patriotic Liberation Front (NPFL) rebellion against Liberian President Doe had created a humanitarian crisis, threatening not only Liberia but also the region as a whole as Liberians refugees began fleeing to neighbouring countries. In 1990 ECOWAS made a controversial decision to send troops to Liberia. The troops, under the title ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), were given a broad mandate that included both peacekeeping and peace enforcement.³⁰ This was an unprecedented decision in an organization that was established for regional economic cooperation. It was also contested by several of the sixteen ECOWAS member states. Only six countries initially contributed troops to the mission and of those six countries, five were

²⁹ This chart is specific to peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations, information from ‘Funmi Olonisakin, “Lessons Learned from an Assessment of Peacekeeping and Peace Support Operations in West Africa.”

³⁰ Herbert Howe, “Lessons of Liberia: ECOMOG and Regional Peacekeeping,” *International Security*, 21, no. 3 (Winter 1996-1997): 151.

Anglophone.³¹ Nigeria was clearly taking the lead, supplying the bulk of the funding, equipment, leadership, and roughly seventy percent of the troops.³² There were questions from the start about the political motives, legality of the mission and mandate.³³ However, for this assessment it is more important to focus on the ground conditions of the mission, as that is where mutineers developed grievances.

The ECOMOG forces were initially meant to serve as peacekeepers; however this was highly problematic because there was no established peace to keep.³⁴ "ECOMOG intervened in the Liberian crisis before any ceasefire agreement, and indeed, against the expressed wishes of the country's most important warring faction, Charles Taylor's NPFL."³⁵ Taylor threatened to attack the ECOMOG troops if they intervened and carried through on the threat the very first day of their arrival to Monrovia.³⁶ The inexperience among the ECOMOG troops and complications of operating with multinational troops was quickly exposed and the rebels advanced despite the ECOMOG presence. The utility of the ECOMOG troops in the conflict became especially questioned when rebel forces "murdered seventy Doe bodyguards- at ECOMOG's headquarters- and then murdered [President] Doe himself nearby."³⁷ After months of direct attacks on ECOMOG troops by rebel groups and a growing number of troop casualties, the Commanding General, Ghanaian General Quainoo, reportedly recommended withdrawing the force from Liberia. Instead, command was switched to Nigerian General Dogonyaro, 3,000 additional troops were added to the initial 2,700, and the troops took on the more assertive role of peace enforcers.³⁸

³¹ The Anglophone countries contributing troops included Liberia, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Nigeria, and Ghana. The only Francophone country to contribute troops at the initial stage was Guinea.

³² Howe, "Lessons of Liberia: ECOMOG and Regional Peacekeeping," 152.

³³ Howe, "Lessons of Liberia: ECOMOG and Regional Peacekeeping," 152; Eboe Hutchful, "The ECOMOG Experience with Peacekeeping in Africa," in *Whither Peacekeeping in Africa?*, Monograph No 36, Institute for Security Studies, April 1999.

³⁴ Olonisakin, *Reinventing Peacekeeping in Africa: Conceptual and Legal Issues in ECOMOG Operations*, 103.

³⁵ Lansana Gberie, "Liberia's War and Peace Process: A Historical Overview," in *Tortuous Road to Peace: The Dynamics of Regional, UN and International Humanitarian Interventions in Liberia*, eds. Festus Aboagye and Alhaji M. S. Bah (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2005): 56.

³⁶ Lansana Gberie, "Liberia's War and Peace Process: A Historical Overview," 56.; Olonisakin, *Reinventing Peacekeeping in Africa: Conceptual and Legal Issues in ECOMOG Operations*, 102.

³⁷ Howe, "Lessons of Liberia: ECOMOG and Regional Peacekeeping," 154.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 155.

Command and control tensions were a problem from the top levels down to the lower ranks. Command at the top levels were chosen by ECOWAS leadership based on political reasons rather than competence or experience, which led those below them in the chain of command to doubt their abilities and decisions.³⁹ It was common for unit commanders to put the interest of their home nation ahead of the mission overall, which often endangered troops and created an environment of distrust.⁴⁰ The official hierarchy was regularly undermined “by the tendency for troop contributing countries to give direct orders to their troops,” even when outside their chain of command.⁴¹ These internal divisions within the mission were likely of particular frustration to the rank and file who had to navigate the divisions while under stressful combat conditions.

In addition to the complications of a vague and changing mandate, the troops were underprepared for the task. From the start the mission was plagued with numerous practical complications including inadequate equipment, intelligence, and logistics.⁴² The training level of the troops, who came from different countries, varied greatly. After Action Reports (AARs) from the mission reveal that there was no standardized training across the contingents, which reduced their effectiveness as a force.⁴³ Interoperability between the troops was further challenged by the variety of equipment, training, and shared languages.⁴⁴ Additionally there was a lack of even basic supplies such as uniforms, boots, and food.⁴⁵

Hutchful observes that this lack of readiness could have been anticipated since most of the contributing countries had not maintained their militaries for a deployment scenario. A review commissioned by the government of Ghana in 1987 showed the operational state of readiness was so low that the army would not be capable of launching even a single company within the infantry brigade into action. Less than ten

³⁹ Olonisakin, *Reinventing Peacekeeping in Africa: Conceptual and Legal Issues in ECOMOG Operations*, 165.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 166.

⁴¹ Olonisakin, “Lessons Learned from an Assessment of Peacekeeping and Peace Support Operations in West Africa,” 29

⁴² Howe, “Lessons of Liberia: ECOMOG and Regional Peacekeeping,” 167.

⁴³ Olonisakin, “Lessons Learned from an Assessment of Peacekeeping and Peace Support Operations in West Africa,” 29

⁴⁴ Olonisakin, *Reinventing Peacekeeping in Africa: Conceptual and Legal Issues in ECOMOG Operations*, 163, 172-175.

⁴⁵ Hutchful, “The ECOMOG Experience with Peacekeeping in Africa.”

percent of the transport fleet was operable, only five of the forty-three aircraft were serviceable, and much of the other equipment was obsolete or unserviceable. Records on Nigeria from the same time show similar issues.⁴⁶ Ghana and Nigeria were the most capable militaries of the contributing countries and their internal lack of readiness likely contributed to the larger problems of the ECOMOG mission. The state of affairs of the contributing militaries may have come as a surprise to many considering five of the six contributing countries were headed by a current or former military leader (the only exception being The Gambia). However, it corresponds with the continental trends identified in the last chapter in which most states were downsizing their armed forces due to the economic constraints of the time and changes in Cold War relationships.

There were other factors, such as Liberia's jungle terrain that made the mission particularly difficult.⁴⁷ ECOMOG planners also underestimated the NPFL; initial ECOWAS estimates assumed the troops would only be in Liberia for six months, whereas the first mission lasted eight years.⁴⁸ Taylor's rebel troops were strengthened with help from (ECOWAS members) Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire and the sale of gold, diamonds, and wood from rebel-controlled regions.⁴⁹ The rebels were often better armed than the ECOMOG troops and had a better understanding of the region and terrain.

The equipment shortfalls, training inadequacies, interoperability challenges, chain of command confusion, and bold enemy led to high fatality rates and severely damaged troop morale.⁵⁰ There were an estimated 500 ECOMOG troop fatalities during the initial mission to Liberia, 400 of which were Nigerians.⁵¹ The harsh conditions and high casualties would have been enough to demoralize the troops but they were pushed to their limit when they often went unpaid, both during the deployment and when they

⁴⁶ Hutchful, "The ECOMOG Experience with Peacekeeping in Africa."

⁴⁷ Mitikishe Maxwell Khobe, "The Evolution and Conduct of the ECOMOG Operations in West Africa," in International Security Studies Monograph No. 44: Boundaries of Peace Operations, February 2000.

⁴⁸ Christopher Tuck, "'Every Car or Moving Object Gone:' The ECOMOG Intervention in Liberia," *Africa Studies Quarterly* 4 no. 1 (2000) <http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v4/v4i1a1.htm>; Hutchful, "The ECOMOG Experience with Peacekeeping in Africa."

⁴⁹ Olonisakin, *Reinventing Peacekeeping in Africa: Conceptual and Legal Issues in ECOMOG Operations* 91; Howe, "Lessons of Liberia: ECOMOG and Regional Peacekeeping," 149, 155-156

⁵⁰ Tuck, "'Every Car or Moving Object Gone:' The ECOMOG Intervention in Liberia."

⁵¹ Adekeye Adebajo, *Liberia's Civil War: Nigeria, ECOMOG and Regional Security in West Africa* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002): 251.

returned home. As previously mentioned, soldiers believe dangerous missions should be compensated with added respect and pay. The ECOMOG mission was particularly difficult and dangerous and the soldiers were often receiving less than they would be at their home bases, which set the stage for mutinies upon their return.

Some analysts attribute this lack of payment as the motivation for the widespread looting and theft by ECOMOG soldiers and have argued that “more frequent payment of allowances would reduce the number of soldiers who loot little items.”⁵² However, much of the looting went far beyond the need to survive and the payment delays should only be seen as a partial explanation for this behaviour. Even if only a fraction of the ECOMOG soldiers were involved in looting, the organization as a whole gained a poor reputation among locals who claimed that ECOMOG really stood for “Every Car Or Moving Object Gone.”⁵³ Some also speculate that the lack of financial and material support for the peacekeepers on the ground led some peacekeepers to actually work with the rebels.⁵⁴ The common perception that ECOMOG soldiers were collaborating with rebels or acting worse than the rebels increased the difficulty of the mission and likely further demoralized many of the participants.

Some of the problems related to the ECOMOG mission can be linked to the fact that the mission was unprecedented in several aspects. However, the mutinies spanned a seventeen-year period, indicating that the complications were not simply a matter of new mission growing pains. Instead the complaints of soldiers on the ECOMOG mission to Liberia are common in other multinational missions, including the recently established mission to Mali, as Chapter Eight will demonstrate.

4.4 The Problem of Transparent Pay

⁵² Olonisakin, *Reinventing Peacekeeping in Africa: Conceptual and Legal Issues in ECOMOG Operations*, 170.

⁵³ Tuck, “‘Every Car or Moving Object Gone:’ The ECOMOG Intervention in Liberia.”

⁵⁴ Howe, “Lessons of Liberia: ECOMOG and Regional Peacekeeping,” 157, 169; W. Ofuatey-Kodjoe, “The Impact of Peacekeeping on Target States: Lessons from the Liberian Experience,” in *The Causes of War and the Consequences of Peacekeeping in Africa*, ed. Ricardo Rene Laremont (Heinemann: Portsmouth, NH, 2002): 136.

In addition to the numerous mission complications described above, the key complaint among ECOMOG soldiers was about remuneration.⁵⁵ The pay grievances from soldiers on the ECOMOG Liberia mission were particularly widespread, however it was a problem not unique to ECOMOG. Mutinies over deployment pay have occurred following missions run by ECOWAS, the AU, and the UN. The different ways that the missions are funded leads to slightly different accusations by soldiers who claim they have not been paid. The ECOMOG funding issue will be discussed first, following by a discussion of UN funded missions.

The ECOMOG mission in Liberia occurred at a time when many states were experiencing major internal economic constraints, as described in the previous chapter. Therefore, it was not a mission in which many West African countries could afford without assistance. The ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee agreed “that troops from participating countries were to be self-sufficient for the first thirty days, after which ECOWAS was to pick up the funding, but it was unable to do so.”⁵⁶ ECOWAS’s goal of collecting fifty million dollars in donations from African states and other international donors was not met.⁵⁷ The “parlous state of most ECOMOG members resulted in incomplete funding for the new force.”⁵⁸ This may explain why countries, like The Gambia, struggled to provide the extra deployment pay to the initial two groups that deployed on the ECOMOG mission and reduced their troop contributions when it became clear that ECOWAS would not provide the expected funds. However, as The Gambia case study will further show, it is difficult to determine where the fault lies in the lack of payment to soldiers (ECOWAS, national government, individual military leaders).

Several years into the ECOMOG mission, the conflict gained more attention worldwide and more international contributions (both in terms of money and troops).⁵⁹ In 1993 the UN set up the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) to

⁵⁵ Olonisakin, “Lessons Learned from an Assessment of Peacekeeping and Peace Support Operations in West Africa,” 30

⁵⁶ Hutchful, “The ECOMOG Experience with Peacekeeping in Africa.”

⁵⁷ Howe, *Ambiguous Order: Military Forces in African States*, 138.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Michelle Pitts, “Sub-regional Solutions for African Conflict: The ECOMOG Experiment,” *Journal of Conflict Studies* XIX No. 1 (Spring 1999); <http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/jcs/article/view/4379/5057>

work in tandem with ECOMOG in Liberia.⁶⁰ However, this often only further complicated the situation. Rather than work together as allies, the ECOMOG soldiers often viewed the UNOMIL mission as a rival. The UNOMIL mission was better funded and “ECOMOG soldiers complained that they were poorly paid when compared to UNOMIL and yet they performed the more rigorous task.”⁶¹ Additionally, some ECOMOG soldiers resented the idea of being monitored by the UN, especially since the organization had been late to intervene.⁶²

Even in later stages of the mission, funding remained a problem, often due to the complexity of the multinational, multi-organizational mission. For example, problems arose when ECOMOG soldiers were “rehabbed” into the UNMIL mission in 2003. In 2004 soldiers from Guinea Bissau staged a mutiny demanding unpaid wages from their involvement in the ECOMIL/UNMIL mission. They accused their army chiefs of pocketing their peacekeeping payments while the army chiefs accused the UN of not paying the salaries from the transition from ECOMIL to UNMIL.⁶³ ECOWAS stepped in and provided the government of Guinea Bissau with approximately \$500,000 to pay the mutineers arrears.⁶⁴

It may be understandable that the involvement of numerous nations and several international organizations would complicate the issue of funding; yet soldiers are generally not sympathetic to the funding difficulties at the organizational level. When they are not paid on time they do not seem to question if the organization is at fault but rather blame their officers or others above them. This makes particular sense within a military chain of command because officers are seen as being responsible for taking care of those who work under them. This is significant because it means delays in payments for multinational missions, regardless of who is at fault, has the potential to cause divisions and suspicions between the ranks of the contributor’s military.

⁶⁰ Pitts, “Sub-regional Solutions for African Conflict: The ECOMOG Experiment.”

⁶¹ Olonisakin, “Lessons Learned from an Assessment of Peacekeeping and Peace Support Operations in West Africa,” 30.

⁶² Tuck, “‘Every Car or Moving Object Gone’: The ECOMOG Intervention in Liberia.”

⁶³ Mark Malan, “Transition with Minimal Assistance: Lessons from Guinea-Bissau?” KAIPTC Paper No. 5, March 2005, 14-15; Mario de Queiroz, “Guinea-Bissau- Fragile Democracy Jeopardised by Military Revolt,” Inter Press Service, October 7, 2004 <http://www.ipsnews.net/2004/10/guinea-bissau-fragile-democracy-jeopardised-by-military-revolt>

⁶⁴ Malan, “Transition with Minimal Assistance: Lessons from Guinea-Bissau?”

ECOWAS funding for the Liberia mission was uncertain from the start and the organization had no prior experience with multinational military missions. However, UN missions have much more funding and a long history of conducting operations around the world. Yet, African mutineers have expressed pay grievances with these missions as well. As will be described below, these mutinies (or threats of mutinies) are often related to the transparency of UN payments compared to the lack of transparency of the payments within the contributing country.

There is no shortage of soldiers volunteering to go on UN missions in West or Central Africa. This is largely because soldiers make significantly more money per month deployed on a UN mission than they would earn stationed at home. Additionally, the missions provide experience that could be valuable for promotions or future job opportunities. For some, the appeal of travelling or simply breaking the routine of life in the barracks may be appealing.

During discussions with Sierra Leonean and Guinean troops, just days and weeks after the Malian coup in 2012, they continually brought up the potential for a multinational mission to Mali for which they could become involved. It became clear that a multinational mission to Mali (at this early stage) was more of a rumour than a plan but still I was struck by how eager soldiers throughout the region were to take part. Similarly, when a Sierra Leonean military contact of mine posted on social media that he was given a spot on the Somalia mission congratulatory messages from his colleagues poured in, despite the high fatality rates among peacekeepers on this particular mission. My personal observations about the strong desire of soldiers to participate in multinational mission are consistent with other writings on the topic. Kwesi Aning explains that in Ghana there is a “perception among the troops that participating in peace operations is an irrefutable way to improve one’s financial situation. Thus being selected to participate in such a force has become a major *raison d’être* for members of the GAF to stay in the forces.”⁶⁵ A report by the Kofi Annan Peacekeeping Training Center (KAIPTC) argues that Ghanaian soldiers are so keen for the opportunity to go on

⁶⁵ Kwesi Aning, “Unintended consequences of peace operations for troop-contributing countries from West Africa: The case of Ghana,” in *Unintended consequences of peacekeeping operations*, ed. Chiyuki Aoil, Cedric de Coning, and Ramesh Thakur (The United National University Press, Tokyo, 2007): 140.

a multinational mission that even the possibility is enough to keep the military more self-disciplined. The report states “soldiers who are found HIV positive miss out on the extra income from peacekeeping missions and therefore make active efforts to prevent themselves from being infected.”⁶⁶ The report credits peacekeeping missions (and particularly the pay incentive) as a reason for the low HIV rate in the military.⁶⁷

The income from peacekeeping missions has the potential to create long-term opportunities for the peacekeepers and their families. Aning explains that in Ghana soldiers on deployments are able to ship goods back home duty free. Therefore, it is common for peacekeepers to send bulk goods to their families who can make a profit selling them in Ghana. Additionally, “those who have managed to invest their peacekeeping funds profitably have subsequently purchased plots of land, built houses, purchased household goods and generally sent their children to better schools.”⁶⁸

It is not only soldiers who benefit financially from involvement in multinational missions; the military as a whole also stands to gain. The previously mentioned KAIPTC report explains how this is the case for Ghanaian participation in UN operations

The Government...is reimbursed for the ordinary contingent member with an amount of \$1096 per month while for the specialist an amount of \$1399 per month is reimbursed. Considering that the ordinary contingent member is paid \$20 a day (making \$600 a month for 30 days), while provision is made for catering and some of the other provisions under self-sustainment (not readily quantifiable), the country makes significant *profits* on each ordinary contingent member and specialist that it deploys on a UN mission.⁶⁹

There are other benefits for a national armed forces besides the financial profits. The U.S., U.K., France, and Canada (among others) offer training programs to African

⁶⁶ Emma Birikorang, “Ghana’s Regional Security Policy: Costs, Benefits, and Consistency,” Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, Accra Ghana, KAIPTC Paper No. 20, September 2007, 10.

⁶⁷ It is Ghanaian policy that all troops must test negative for HIV before being able to deploy on a peacekeeping mission.

⁶⁸ Aning, “Unintended consequences of peace operations for troop-contributing countries from West Africa: The case of Ghana,” 140.

⁶⁹ Birikorang, “Ghana’s Regional Security Policy: Costs, Benefits, and Consistency,” 8; emphasis in original text.

militaries contributing troops to multinational missions.⁷⁰ Additionally, there are lease reimbursement programs, which enable African militaries to upgrade their equipment.⁷¹ For states with a bloated military, the missions can serve as a “release valve” by stationing a portion of the military outside the country for a period of time.⁷²

On the one hand this may seem like a win for all, as both individuals and the country benefit, but the discrepancy between what the UN pays the country and what the individual soldiers receive is commonly a cause for grievances among the peacekeepers. The UN is very transparent about what it pays a country for peacekeepers and the \$1096/\$1399 figures are publicly available.⁷³ Soldiers in Sierra Leone who expressed grievances about the pay for peacekeeping missions were fairly close in what they stated the UN was paying Sierra Leone for involvement in various missions (quotes from interviewees ranged from \$1,000 to \$1,500). If these soldiers who were located at remote bases in Sierra Leone could have relatively accurate understanding of the pay, surely soldiers in countries with a better technology infrastructure, such as Nigeria and Ghana, could easily find the information if they wanted. This transparency contrasts with the lack of transparency usually found in the defence industry where contracts, spending, and individual pay is often not publicly available information.

Countries contributing troops to multinational missions justify paying peacekeepers less than the pay allotted by the UN because there are some internal expenses involved in the deployment. For example, peacekeepers often attend special training or screening in their home country before deploying. Additionally, it leaves the contributing country without those troops. In terms of mutinies it is less important to determine if the pay difference is justified and more important to understand how soldiers view the discrepancy.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 6.

⁷¹ Aning, “Unintended consequences of peace operations for troop-contributing countries from West Africa: The case of Ghana,” 135-137; Birikorang, “Ghana’s Regional Security Policy: Costs, Benefits, and Consistency,” 8.

⁷² Elizabeth Dickinson, “For tiny Burundi, big returns in sending peacekeepers to Somalia,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 22, 2011, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2011/1222/For-tiny-Burundi-big-returns-in-sending-peacekeepers-to-Somalia>

⁷³ For example, see “Financing Peacekeepers” page of the UN website. <https://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/financing.shtml>

When soldiers are unclear what the additional money from multinational missions is being used for, they often assume corruption is involved. Interviews with current soldiers in Sierra Leone illustrate this point. One soldier explained “these people [peacekeepers] are not happy, they are grumbling. 1,225 to country but we only get 400. We do not know what the government is using the money for.”⁷⁴ In a separate interview a soldier stated

if you think, they [the Sierra Leone government] are making something like one million, two million dollars over six months and they are not doing anything, not buying uniforms, not buying medicine for soldiers. They are not helping those that are representing us in Darfur. They are managing it poorly. If they don’t change the system it will happen.⁷⁵

The “it” is referring to a mutiny. Another Sierra Leonean soldier speculated that the officers were benefitting from the missions by noting their lifestyles which he felt could not be maintained on a regular salary.⁷⁶ Similarly, in an interview with a Gambian soldier about the 1991 and 1992 post-deployment mutinies, he said the unit mutinied because they “have seen senior officers robbing them.”⁷⁷

Nigerian soldiers have also been known to express dissatisfaction about late payments for UN peacekeeping missions or angrily speculate about how the remainder of the UN pay is being used by the military. Nigerian soldiers (and police officers) have consistently complained about unpaid salaries from peacekeeping missions and their grievances typically place the blame on their officers.⁷⁸ The Nigerian case that has received the most media attention is a mutiny among returned peacekeepers that occurred in 2008 in Akure. In this incident twenty-seven soldiers recently returned from the UN mission in Liberia blocked a highway by setting up bonfires and chanted slogans

⁷⁴ Author interview with Sierra Leonean rank and file soldier, May 2011; for cases in which soldiers provided information about current grievances I have chosen to not provide source identification letters to help further their confidentiality.

⁷⁵ Author interview with Sierra Leonean rank and file soldier, May 2011.

⁷⁶ Author interview with Sierra Leonean rank and file soldier, May 2011.

⁷⁷ Author interview with military source F (former officer), August 2012.

⁷⁸ Adelowo Oladipo, “600 Nigerian police peacekeepers protest in Lagos over unpaid allowances,” *Tribune*, May 21, 2011, <http://www.tribune.com.ng/sat/index.php/news/4199-600-nigeria-police-peacekeepers-protest-in-lagos-over-unpaid-allowances.html>; “Nigeria police UN peacekeepers grumble over unpaid allowances,” *Nigeria Police Watch*, May 21, 2011, <http://www.nigeriapolicewatch.com/2011/05/nigeria-police-un-peacekeepers-grumble-over-unpaid-allowances/>

and songs condemning their officers.⁷⁹ All mutineers were arrested and jailed. The mutineers' lawyer explained that 'this money was paid to them by the UN and stolen by some military officers. The officers were not detained for one day.' In 2009 the mutineers were sentenced to life in jail. The officers were court martialed, found guilty and only demoted and ordered to return the money.⁸⁰ There were numerous editorials and online postings expressing anger at the severe sentences of the enlisted soldiers compared to the lenient punishments for the officers.⁸¹ A statement by the Nigerian Army public relations officer six months after the trials noted that although they did not believe the officers intentionally stole the money (rather misappropriated it) the situation continued to have "negative implications on the morale and disposition" of the military ranks "towards one another."⁸² Therefore they decided to retire the accused officers. In 2010 the rank and file soldiers appealed their case, the sentence was overturned and the soldiers were discharged from the military.⁸³ This case highlights that mutinies often result from suspicions among the rank and file towards their superior but also shows that these divisions can be intensified with the way that mutinies are dealt with by the hierarchy.

It is not always a simple matter of peacekeepers claiming their salaries go directly into the pockets of officers. Soldiers have also argued that the process of selection for peacekeeping missions has been corrupted. In an interview with a soldier in Sierra Leone he explained that there is a group of rank and file soldiers who want to "incite the whole military against higher authorities." When I asked why, he responded that the soldiers who are selected to go on peacekeeping missions are expected to pay the assigning officers "something like ten percent...It is a mission, if you are fortunate to go they want you to give ten percent. If you don't do it they hold up your rank, they make you relinquish your appointment."⁸⁴ Similar accusations were made in the Sierra

⁷⁹ AP, "Ex-U.N. peacekeepers get life in mutiny case," April 28, 2009

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Examples of forums discussing the topic include Nairaland Forum and Nigerian Village Square. Additionally the following article discusses public opinion on the issue: Senator Iroegbu, "Nigerian Army Pardons Akure 27," *This Day*, December 3, 2010

⁸² Juliana Taiwo, "Mutiny: Army retired indicted senior officers," *NigeriaWorld*, October 21, 2009

⁸³ Iroegbu, "Nigerian Army Pardons Akure 27."

⁸⁴ Author interview with Sierra Leonean rank and file soldier, May 2011

Leone media in 2013 and which the government strongly denied.⁸⁵ Aning observed a similar trend in Ghana. He explains “different types of ‘protocol’ facilities are extended by junior officers to their senior officers, either to get their duty tours extended or to be selected to participate in a peacekeeping operation as a whole.”⁸⁶ He notes a variety of different ways that the protocols work but the general trend is that those in the position to select who deploys often require compensation from those they choose. This practice extends far up the chain of command and also includes corruption over which units or branches of the military will be involved in the mission, not only the selection of individual peacekeepers.⁸⁷ During interviews with soldiers in Burkina Faso, none mentioned being required to pay to go on a mission but they were adamant that the selection was based on personal relationships, not necessarily merit. Even an individual who was in an authoritative position within the military admitted “if you do not know someone you will never get assigned to an important mission.”⁸⁸

The perceived corruption within the selection process and placing the blame on officers for late pay is significant because it indicates a more systemic problem. The roots of the grievances over peacekeeping pay go deeper than just issues of money. The perceived corruption threatens to delegitimize the officer corps and their orders in the minds of the enlisted soldiers, which weakens the hierarchy.⁸⁹ The resentment and suspicion of the soldiers towards their superiors does not necessarily vanish if/when the soldiers receive their due pay. The case study of The Gambia (Chapter Six) will show how the late payments for peacekeepers was seen as evidence of corruption among the officer corps. Even after the soldiers received their pay, doubts and suspicions persisted in the minds of enlisted soldiers against their officers, resulting in further instability within the armed forces.

⁸⁵ “Pay scandal rocks Sierra Leone’s troops in Somalia,” *Africa Review*, October 17, 2013.

⁸⁶ Aning, “Unintended consequences of peace operations for troop-contributing countries from West Africa: The case of Ghana,” 144.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 144-148.

⁸⁸ Author interview with military source AA (former officer, currently working in the security sector), March 2012.

⁸⁹ Similar argument to corruption delegitimizing organizations and impeding the peacebuilding efforts, as explained by Philippe Le Billon “Corrupting Peace? Peacebuilding and Post-Conflict Corruption,” *International Peacekeeping* 15 3 (2008): 344-361.

4.5 Revealing the Greener Grass

Another important aspect of multinational missions is that they bring together soldiers from a variety of African (and in some cases non-African) countries. The soldiers live and work together with their foreign comrades usually for extended periods of time. The individual soldiers perform the same job as their fellow peacekeepers, under the same conditions but each is paid by their home government. The various countries contributing troops do not pay the same amount to the soldiers they deploy. The economic conditions and cost of living between countries in the region vary widely and thus it could be expected that salaries would also vary. However, from the perspective of the soldiers, those that were on the lower end seemed to view the pay difference with contempt. For example, soldiers interviewed in Sierra Leone made vague references to soldiers from other countries making more than them (however no one named a particular country). A Gambian officer explained that a key aspect to the 1991 and 1992 mutinies following the multinational mission in Liberia was that the soldiers “believed they were being paid less than their counterparts from other countries.”⁹⁰ Another Gambian interviewee said the mutineers thought that the Nigerians specifically were being paid more than them.⁹¹

The variations in pay among the ECOMOG soldiers were a consistent source of tension during (and after) the mission. ECOWAS had agreed on an operational allowance of five U.S. dollars per day per deployed soldier and that each contributing country would be responsible for paying their troops. However, there were “noticeable differences both in the amount and pattern in which some contingents were paid.”⁹² Soldiers from Sierra Leone claimed that even when paid regularly they were not

⁹⁰ Author interview with military source F (former military officer), May 2012.

⁹¹ Author interview with member of Gambian diaspora community, currently in U.S. defense sector, November 2013.

⁹² Olonisakin, *Reinventing Peacekeeping in Africa: Conceptual and Legal Issues in ECOMOG Operations*, 179.

receiving the agreed upon amount. Soldiers from Nigeria were known to go months on end with no pay, whereas other contingents received regular and full pay.⁹³

Soldiers compare more than just pay when on multinational missions. Contributing countries on the ECOMOG mission were expected to supply their own soldiers with uniforms and equipment. The difference in uniforms was “one of the most glaring aspects” of differentiation between the troops. Olonisakin’s interviews with ECOMOG soldiers reveal expressions of frustration at the state of their uniforms compared to their comrades from other countries. The Nigerian soldiers in particular were so undersupplied and outfitted compared to the other soldiers that they often purchased uniforms from other contingents. One Nigerian officer states

some of the countries are unable to re-supply their people. Nigeria, for example, you need to see some of our soldiers in the bush. Their condition, uniforms, and so on, is appalling...Some have resorted to buying from other contingents. There is now a sale point on premise.⁹⁴

Another officer explains that it was “disheartening to note that of all the contingents in Ops. Liberty the Nigerian contingent is the most badly turned out.”⁹⁵ A rank and file Nigerian soldier states, “When I arrived here [Liberia], a Guinean soldier was kind enough to give me one of his uniforms. Although it was a bigger size, it was better than what I had. Other countries do not have this problem of uniform.”⁹⁶ In all these examples, the respondents note the condition of the Nigerians in comparison to the other contingents. The ability to see themselves next to better-outfitted soldiers seemed to add shame and anger to the situation. This was likely especially the case for Nigerians because Nigeria was funding the majority of the mission and thus one would expect its soldiers to be the best equipped, not the worst.

In a military context, uniforms are much more than assigned clothing. Generally military uniforms are seen as being earned, with individuals not allowed to wear the full uniform until passing a certain level of training and tests. They help unite a group of individuals and separate them from the civilian population. There are strict protocols on

⁹³ Ibid., 179-180.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 180.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 180.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 181.

how to wear uniforms and discipline for those who wear it incorrectly. There is usually a high level of pride associated with military uniforms and to be denied uniforms or have uniforms in poor shape is likely to be demoralizing.

There were other areas where ECOMOG soldiers expressed dissatisfaction after comparing themselves to soldiers from other countries. A former Gambian soldier argues that the Gambian contingent was undertrained compared to other West African soldiers and other West African countries were more prepared to deal with casualties.⁹⁷ Additionally, during the ECOMOG mission, Nigerian troops frequently complained that the Ghanaian troops were eating better than them.⁹⁸

Many peace operations in Africa not only include soldiers from various countries but these soldiers then belong to different organizational structures. For example, during the peace operation in Liberia there were ECOMOG troops and UN troops deployed in the same region, conducting similar missions, but under different command structures with different pay, provisions, etc. As previously mentioned, ECOMOG soldiers in Liberia grew resentful of the better funding of the UN mission. Olonisakin notes that “the arrival of UNOMIL on the scene made ECOMOG’s office accommodation appear substandard” and she goes on to describe how this caused tensions between the two groups.⁹⁹ The situation became even more complex when the UN and US funded troops from Tanzania and Uganda to join an “expanded” ECOMOG. However, these East African troops were not funded by ECOWAS and were paid three times what the original ECOMOG troops were making. Additionally they were believed to be receiving better food than the West African troops and the disparity “further lowered the morale within the original force.”¹⁰⁰

Academics in the 1960s and 1970s also identified that resentment was common when soldiers were exposed to foreign soldiers who had better conditions or pay. They noted that military officers who trained together in European military schools carried out the first coups in Africa. For example, the officers who conducted the first coups in

⁹⁷ Samsudeen Sarr, *Coup d’etat by the Gambia National Army* (Xlibris: 2007): 120.

⁹⁸ Hutchful, “The ECOMOG Experience with Peacekeeping in Africa.”

⁹⁹ Olonisakin, *Reinventing Peacekeeping in Africa: Conceptual and Legal Issues in ECOMOG Operations*, 160-161.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 194.

Ghana and Nigeria trained together in Sandhurst in Britain.¹⁰¹ J.M. Lee explains that when officers first trained at foreign schools with other African officers they were exposed to the variation in salary and work conditions between African militaries.¹⁰² Those who realized their conditions were on the low end became resentful and more demanding of their government. The foreign training alongside African officers from other countries changed the way that the officers thought about their own role in the military and the role of the military in society.¹⁰³

Multinational foreign missions for enlisted soldiers can be viewed in a similar light as international training opportunities for officers. The majority of those deployed on multinational foreign missions are junior enlisted soldiers and it is likely that for many it would be their first time to extensively engage with colleagues from other countries. The new experience also brings new insights and often makes soldiers question their conditions, particularly in comparison to others.

4.6 False Advertising

Lastly, the soldiers participating in peacekeeping missions often have false expectations of the missions, which lead to feelings of resentment and suspicion towards their hierarchy. The previous sections detailed the hardship conditions and pay issues common in deployments in the region, but it is also important to view this in relation to how the missions are 'sold' to the soldiers. West and Central African governments regularly treat appointment on a multinational mission as a reward, giving the impression that the mission will be an easy way to make money. However, as this chapter has shown, these missions are often very difficult and dangerous, which can cause a disconnect between the expectations and reality of the mission.

¹⁰¹ Guttenridge, *Military Regimes in Africa*, 28-29; First, *The Barrel of a Gun: Political Power in Africa and the Coup d'Etat*, 23.

¹⁰² J.M. Lee, *African Armies and Civil Order* (London: Chatto and Windus, Ltd., 1969): 92-93.

¹⁰³ There are some who believe the foreign military schools took a more direct role in orchestrating a coup plan, however that argument will not be discussed here as it is not applicable to mutinies.

Hutchful observes this approach towards multinational missions within Ghana during the ECOMOG mission by noting that “troop earnings from peacekeeping operations abroad have become a major factor in stabilizing relations between the army and the Rawlings government, with participation in peacekeeping operations carefully regulated so that all soldiers feel that they have fair access to opportunities to augment their income.”¹⁰⁴ He also explains that this became problematic because “of course Liberia and Sierra Leone were far from being well-heeled peacekeeping missions,” especially in comparison to other UN missions.

A similar situation occurred in The Gambia. A former Gambia soldier explained that most of those chosen for the initial ECOMOG mission were individuals who had not been part of the Confederal Army.¹⁰⁵ The Confederal Army will be explained in more detail in Chapter Six, but participation in this joint unit with the Senegalese also allowed for increased pay. The ECOMOG mission was used to compensate those that did not economically benefit from involvement in the Confederal Army. Former Gambian soldiers explained to me that when the ECOMOG mission was announced most soldiers wanted to be a part of it. When I asked why one former soldiers responded “the truth is that people were saying this is one of the best paid forces in the world and people were saying if you go when you come home you have [thousands of] dollars in your bank account.”¹⁰⁶ A former Gambian officer confirms this common belief by explaining

it was widely believed in the GNA [Gambian National Army] that all participating armies in the mission were to be paid hard foreign currencies-dollars-from cash pledged by the international community. The exact amount was said to be over a hundred a day.¹⁰⁷

For the Gambian contingent that participated in the ECOMOG mission, their pay expectations were not realistic considering the \$5 a day ECOMOG pay rate. Lt Col (ret.) Sarr notes that the Gambian government could only afford three dollars a day per

¹⁰⁴ Hutchful, “The ECOMOG Experience with Peacekeeping in Africa.”

¹⁰⁵ Author interview military source C (former enlisted soldier) October 2012.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Sarr, *Coup d'état by the Gambia National Army*, 209.

soldier and even this amount was often not paid, leading to great “disappointment and frustration” among the troops.¹⁰⁸

Olonisakin also observes the issue of unrealistic expectations of the ECOMOG mission among Nigerian soldiers. She quotes a Nigerian General who stated that in his country “the planners did not heed warnings at the planning stage, to prepare the troops for possible combat in Liberia.”¹⁰⁹ Rank and file soldiers backed up the General’s observation by stating that they were never given an accurate picture of the situation in Liberia. Olonisakin goes on to explain that

The troops were not mentally prepared for what to expect in Liberia. Nigerian troops for example were told that they were going on a peacekeeping assignment in Liberia, not war, and that they were going to earn some U.S. dollars. This affected the disposition of the troops to the operation. Indeed, morale was seriously weakened when the troops arrived in Liberia only to face heavy artillery fire from the NPFL¹¹⁰

While the ECOMOG mission was in some ways exceptional in the level of combat endured by the peacekeepers, it is not the only peacekeeping mission that has resulted in high casualties. The ongoing African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which consists of all African troops, has also resulted in high troop fatalities. The official figures show that there have been 500 deaths among AMISOM troops (as of October 2012) but many security analysts and journalists claim that the real number is three times as high.¹¹¹ The UN recently estimated that the number could be as high as 3,000 peacekeeper fatalities in Somalia.¹¹² AMISOM troops have consistently been targeted by Al-Shabaab, putting the soldiers in combat positions rather than peacekeeping roles. Media coverage of the mutiny of Burundian troops following their AMISOM deployment noted that the contingent was located in one of the most dangerous regions and troops “face almost daily attacks.”¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Olonisakin, *Reinventing Peacekeeping in Africa: Conceptual and Legal Issues in ECOMOG Operations*, 147.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Greg Mills, “AMISOM: An African success story?” Brethurst Foundation, October 14, 2012; Charles Onyango-Obbo, “Okay, can we now send AMISOM to Afghanistan?” *Africa Review*, October 8, 2012.

¹¹² “Up to 3,000 African peacekeepers killed in Somalia since 2007,” *Reuters*, May 9, 2013.

¹¹³ “Six months of Unpaid wages for Burundian soldier in Somalia,” November 11, 2010, Burundiintwari.com; <http://burundiintwari.com/english.php?id=17>

It is an unfortunate reality that when African countries contribute troops to peacekeeping operations they are likely to be involved in the most dangerous missions. The Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (Brahimi Report) showed evidence that “the current era of ‘complex’ peacekeeping in civil-war-torn states has seen a drastic shift away from developed-country blue helmets- the standard practice during the Cold War- towards blue helmets supplied by third world states.”¹¹⁴ While this trend has been criticized for having “an unpleasant mercenary flavor, whereby rich countries appear to pay soldiers from very poor countries to undertake dangerous peacekeeping jobs” the pattern does not appear to have shifted since the Brahimi report was issued over a decade ago.¹¹⁵ Therefore, the commonly held perception of viewing peacekeeping operations as separate (and easier) from combat operations is often not applicable to the types of missions that African soldiers partake in.

In addition to false expectations about pay and the intensity of the conflict, soldiers have also claimed they were misled about the length of the tour. On the ECOMOG mission, states agreed to rotate troops every six months. While some countries, such as Ghana and The Gambia, followed this procedure, others did not. For Nigeria, Guinea, and Sierra Leone, the average tour of duty ended up being between eighteen and twenty-four months.¹¹⁶ However, research shows that Nigerian troops were at times deployed as part of ECOMOG for three years.¹¹⁷ These deployments were an exceptionally long time to be stationed in a combat zone. Troops’ morale and productivity was diminished as a result of the extensions beyond their expected end date.¹¹⁸ This was not a problem unique to ECOMOG. In 2012 Nigerian soldiers on the UN/AU mission in Darfur threatened to mutiny because they had been in Sudan for a

¹¹⁴ James D. Fearon and David Laitin, “Neotrusteeship and the Problem of Weak States,” *International Security* 28 no. 4 (Spring 2004): 25; William J. Durch, et. al. *The Brahimi Report and the Future of United Nations Peace Operations* (Washington D.C.: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 2003): 71.

¹¹⁵ James D. Fearon, “International Institutions and Collective Authorization of the Use of Force,” in *Can the World be Governed? Possibilities for Effective Multilateralism*, ed. A. Alexandroff (Waterloo, Ontario: W. Laurier University Press, 2008): 20.

¹¹⁶ Funmi Olonisakin, “African Peacekeeping and the Impact on African Military Personnel,” in *The Psychology of the Peacekeeper*, eds. Thomas W. Britt and Amy B. Adler (Praeger: Westport, CT, 2003): 303.

¹¹⁷ Aning, “Unintended consequences of peace operations for troop-contributing countries from West Africa: The case of Ghana,” 142.

¹¹⁸ Olonisakin, “African Peacekeeping and the Impact on African Military Personnel,” 303.

month beyond their expected tour completion date.¹¹⁹ Chadian troops deployed to Mali have recently mutinied over a similar grievance. Studies on the psychology of peacekeepers have shown that uncertainty in the length of deployment is one of the critical issues impacting stress levels among peacekeepers. The research suggests that standard deployment lengths or better communication about the deployment specifics can significantly reduce stress, and similarly could prevent situations such as the Nigerian peacekeepers mutiny threats.¹²⁰

The framing of a mission affects the mindset of the troops involved. For many multinational missions involving African soldiers, the deployments are treated as rewards rather than a sacrifice. Yet, many of these missions are much more difficult and dangerous than anticipated, leading to a discrepancy between the expectations and the reality for the soldiers on the ground. Soldiers then feel that they have been misled or that they deserve more for the increased hardships.

4.7 The Nigerian Puzzle

This chapter has placed heavy emphasis on the ECOWAS missions, due to the number of mutinies following participation in these missions. However, one puzzle that remains is why there were not more Nigerian mutinies during or following the ECOMOG mission. Although a multinational mission, Nigeria contributed the vast majority of the troops, with over 12,000 Nigerian soldiers in Liberia in 1993.¹²¹ The Nigerian troops were often the most poorly cared for, despite the large amount of money that Nigeria invested in the mission. Therefore, one could assume they would have mutinied more than they did. Howe offers a similar observation about Nigeria by stating the “lack of pretorianism is somewhat surprising, given both the anger of many officers towards the decision by their government not to conduct offensive operations and

¹¹⁹ Kadir Badsha Mukhtar and Misbahu Bashir, “Nigeria: Darfur Operations-Nigerian Soldiers Threaten Mutiny- Ask to be Airlifted Home,” *Daily Trust*, June 26 2012.

¹²⁰ Amy B. Adler, Brett T. Litz, and Paul T. Bartone, “The Nature of Peacekeeping Stressors,” in *The Psychology of The Peacekeeper* eds. Thomas W. Britt and Amy B. Adler (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003): 152-153.

¹²¹ Adebajo, *Liberia's Civil War: Nigeria, ECOMOG and Regional Security in West Africa*, 121.

frustrations felt by the soldiers about substandard living conditions.”¹²² However, he does not propose an explanation for why the Nigerian officers did not take political action about their grievances.

The answer to why there were not more mutinies likely lies in both the ground deployment conditions and the political climate in Nigeria. As Chapters Two and Three have explained, mutineers generally revolt when they believe their actions will be successful. Olonisakin notes that the tensions between officers and other ranks were especially pronounced among the Nigerian troops. She observes that this was apparent “with increase in cases of insubordination, where soldiers sometimes reacted badly to officers at checkpoints.”¹²³ Yet, she does not note any cases of organized mutiny. For Nigerian soldiers, they likely felt that a mutiny would not be successful at home or on the deployment. The complex and often chaotic environment of the Liberian civil war did not allow for an ideal situation for Nigerian soldiers (or other contingents) to open a dialogue about their conditions. The Nigerian peacekeepers were deployed the longest, at times for two to three years. They often integrated themselves into the local communities and developed relationships with local women, and in some ways seemed to accept that they would be in Liberia for longer than a standard temporary deployment.¹²⁴ They made up for their irregular payment by “doing business” with the local community.¹²⁵ This involved many variations including commercializing ECOMOG transport and pilfering ECOMOG equipment and supplies (especially petroleum).¹²⁶ At times soldiers were directly engaged in other areas such as mineral extraction.¹²⁷ Soldiers were also accused of looting and taxing local communities.

In Olonisakin’s interviews with Nigerian rank and file soldiers she explains that they often felt that their government was intentionally keeping them on deployment longer for fear that the return of so many disgruntled soldiers “under an unstable

¹²² Howe, *Ambiguous Order: Military Forces in African States*, 152.

¹²³ Olonisakin, *Reinventing Peacekeeping in Africa: Conceptual and Legal Issues in ECOMOG Operations*, 210.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 197-199.

¹²⁵ Festus B. Aboagye, *ECOMOG: A Sub-regional Experience in Conflict Resolution, Management and Peacekeeping in Liberia* (Accra: Sedco Publishing Limited, 1999): 165-166.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

political climate could lead to insurrection in the army.”¹²⁸ She notes that based on her conversations with these soldiers, “it is easy to believe this claim.”¹²⁹ However, of course soldiers did return but for those that harboured resentment about their experiences, the “unstable political climate” in Nigeria may have deterred them from mutinying. During the initial ECOMOG mission to Liberia (1990-1998), Nigeria was ruled by two different military leaders, each who came to power in a coup.¹³⁰ General Abacha took power in 1993 and had a particularly poor human rights record. Under his regime there were “rumours of growing unrest and deep divisions in the middle and lower ranks of the army.”¹³¹ In 1995, thirty-nine military personnel were arrested and charged with coup-plotting, fourteen of which were given death sentences.¹³² This incident and the generally repressive environment under Abacha likely discouraged Nigerian soldiers from mutinying. It was not until after Nigeria transitioned to civilian democratic rule that Nigerian peacekeepers began to mutiny. The case of Nigerian peacekeepers can be used to support the point made in Chapter Three that mutinies are most likely to occur in states that adhere to more democratic principles.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the grievances of soldiers following deployments are similar to the grievances expressed in other mutinies in the dataset. Both involve complaints over conditions of service as well as feelings of perceived injustice. However, the deployment setting brings a heightened importance to the grievances. Many of the more vague complaints about neglect for the military take on a practical importance during deployments. For example, inadequate equipment or logistics on a deployment can put soldiers in life-threatening danger. Additionally, soldiers expect more pay due to the increased hardships and risk involved in deployments. They also

¹²⁸ Olonisakin, *Reinventing Peacekeeping in Africa: Conceptual and Legal Issues in ECOMOG Operations*, 182.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 183.

¹³⁰ There was also a brief 3-month period in 1993 in which a civilian interim government was established.

¹³¹ Adebajo, *Liberia's Civil War: Nigeria, ECOMOG and Regional Security in West Africa*, 171-172.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 172.

seem to find particular offense in delayed payments for veterans. While hierarchies may be able to fulfil the expectations of soldiers when based at home, the heightened expectations and complications that come with deployments often prove to be too much for the chain of command. The basic expectations of soldiers that they will be taken care of as well as the heightened expectations of increased pay are often unfulfilled and thus symbolize a break in the implicit contract between soldiers and their superiors. Disobedience through mutiny becomes easier to justify in light of the unfulfilled obligations of the superiors.

Deployments on multinational missions in particular create new avenues for perceptions of injustice. Soldiers are able to compare their situations directly with those from other countries. When they compare living conditions, pay, uniforms, equipment, etc. with their foreign colleagues there are bound to be discrepancies. Soldiers often alter their views of their own conditions and treatment in comparison to others. Involvement in multinational missions is profitable for the contributing state and can lead to new opportunities for corruption or new opportunities to perceive corruption, especially when there is not transparency in how the added income is used.

This thesis has addressed how mutinies are often used as a form of communication between junior soldiers and their superiors. However, this chapter has also shown that miscommunication can contribute to mutinies. Mutinies that follow deployments, particularly multinational mission, often express resentment that they were misled about aspects of the deployment. Soldiers commonly complain that their pay is less than they anticipated or that their deployment tour was longer than expected. In these cases clearer communication down the chain of command could likely lessen the tensions as many of the expectations (particularly in relation to pay) appear to be based on rumour rather than military guidance.

The trend of mutinies following deployments is particularly valuable in identifying potential future scenarios that may trigger mutinies. Whereas the previous chapter linked mutinies to global trends, which were in many ways unique to the time period, the increase in multinational peace operations is an ongoing issue and one which does not appear to have a near term conclusion. The majority of UN missions and UN peacekeepers are located on the African continent and added to these are missions by the

African Union and regional organizations (ECOWAS, SADC, IGAD).¹³³ Therefore, there are numerous opportunities in the near future for African soldiers to be involved in multinational operations. However, this also provides numerous possibilities for soldiers to find grievances that could escalate into mutinies, if lessons learned from previous incidents are not addressed.

¹³³ Cedric de Coning, "The Evolution of Peace Operations in Africa: Trajectories and Trends," *Journal of International Peacekeeping* 14 (2010): 26.

Chapter Five- A Coup Hidden in a Mutiny: Case Study of Sierra Leone

5.1 Introduction

On the morning of April 29, 1992 roughly fifty soldiers entered Freetown and staged a revolt against President Momoh. By mid-afternoon the president had fled the city and Sierra Leoneans found out they were being led by a twenty-seven year old military captain. Academic literature and media reporting vary on whether they call the action a coup or a mutiny. This chapter will provide new details on the events that day as well as how the plan to revolt developed. The case will show that the confusion between what to label the incident is understandable as even the soldiers involved had divergent ideas of the goals of their actions. The rank and file soldiers believed they were headed to the capital to ask for payment arrears while the officers had a more ambitious plan to overthrow the government. In many aspects the situation in Sierra Leone was specific to the context of the country's emerging civil war, yet the pattern of a planned mutiny leading directly to a coup has happened elsewhere in the region, notably in Togo in 1963 and in Côte d'Ivoire in 1999.

This chapter provides a brief history of the role of the military in Sierra Leone leading up to the events in 1992. The ceremonial role of the Sierra Leone military and a culture of political and familial recruitment had disastrous effects when the military was tasked with countering rebel forces. The chapter will focus primarily on the Tiger unit, who were responsible for overthrowing President Momoh. The hardship conditions both bonded this combat unit together and caused them to resent the government, a feeling shared with much of the civilian population at the time. The chapter will then show how the complaints crystallized into a plan for a mutiny and ultimately resulted in a coup. Analysis will be presented to show that the 1992 revolt created further divisions within the military, which contributed to two more coups within five years.

It has been over twenty years since the 1992 revolt and much has changed, however according to military interviewees some sectors of the Sierra Leonean military

still see a mutiny in their future. The last part of the chapter will describe the current grievances and show that soldiers in recent years have attempted various tactics to open a dialogue with political and military leadership about their conditions. Some of the key complaints among current soldiers involve peacekeeping pay. Compared to most of its neighbours, Sierra Leone is a newcomer to peacekeeping operations. However, only six months into the AMISOM mission its soldiers have already expressed many of the common grievances among peacekeepers, as described in the previous chapter. A failure to address these concerns can also lead to another common trend, deployment related mutinies.

5.2 The Shifting Role of the Military

By 1992 the Sierra Leone military was no stranger to political interventions. Between independence in 1961 and the events in 1992 the military had carried out two coups, a counter-coup and several other unsuccessful attempts or plots.¹ This section will briefly explain the role of the military in Sierra Leone leading up to 1992, with particular emphasis on the relationship between the military and politicians. This relationship shaped the development of the officer corps and affected general military recruitment.

There has been a long tradition of close interaction between civilian political elites and the officer corps in Sierra Leone. In early independence years it was common for political elites to serve as patrons for individual army officers.² Furthermore, "in order for the client, the army officer, to rise in the hierarchy of his own organization, it was necessary for him to acquire the benevolent support of a civilian mentor."³ Thomas Cox relates this patron-client relationship to the prevalence of coups, counter-coups, and

¹ There was a coup in 1967, followed several days later with an internal counter-coup. Details on this event can be found in Humphrey J. Fisher, "Elections and Coups in Sierra Leone, 1967," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 7, no. 4 (Dec. 1969): 611-636. A second coup was conducted in 1968.

Additionally, Patrick McGowan's dataset shows 3 coup attempts and 2 coup plots between 1961-1992.

² Thomas S. Cox, *Civil-Military Relations in Sierra Leone: A Case Study of African Soldiers in Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976): 220-223.

³ *Ibid.*, 223.

coup attempts because military personnel had a vested interest in having their patrons stay in power or come to power. The importance of these personalized links within the officer ranks undermined the integrity of the officer corps. Individual officers were seen as receiving promotions, appointments, or material gains based on personal ties, rather than merit. The highly personal way in which benefits were received within the military also led to highly personalized rivalries within the officer corps.⁴ Thus the officer corps in Sierra Leone did not have a strong professional code or apolitical identity. It was not a cohesive group and “remained a ‘corps’ in name only.”⁵

The mixed loyalties within the military were especially apparent during President Siaka Stevens’ time in office. Stevens’ tumultuous relationship with the military started as soon as he was elected in 1967 and immediately ousted by the military just hours after he was sworn to office. However, he was reinstated the following year when junior military members overthrew their seniors in what is popularly called the ‘Sergeants Revolt.’ The junior soldiers announced that they ousted their military superiors because “the rank and file of the army and police have been ignored.”⁶ Stevens seemed to take note of this complaint and initially treated the junior ranks of the military as heroes and the military budget increased by roughly one-third within two years of the 1968 Sergeants Revolt.⁷ Even when the military handed control back to Stevens, the rank and file soldiers demanded that the officers remain in jail. Stevens acceded and most of the officers remained locked away for nine month to a year after the coup, at which point only a fraction were reinstated.⁸ The junior ranks’ insistence on keeping the officers jailed symbolized a major distrust between the rank and file soldiers and officer corps at the time. This same distrust among ranks would fuel the 1992 and 1997 coups.

While Stevens was initially grateful for the support from the junior ranks, the positive relationship was not long lasting and the honeymoon period had ended by 1971 when soldiers attacked Stevens’ house in a coup attempt. Several of the perpetrators

⁴ John Cartwright, *Political Leadership in Sierra Leone* (London: Croom Helm, Ltd., 1978): 80-81.

⁵ Cox, *Civil-Military Relations in Sierra Leone*, 90.

⁶ Jimmy Kandeh, *Coups from Below: Armed Subalterns and State Power in West Africa*, 146.

⁷ E.D.A. Turay and A. Abraham, *The Sierra Leone Army*, (London, Macmillan, 1987): 137.

⁸ Ibid.

were the same individuals who helped bring him to power just three years earlier.⁹ A second attempt occurred three years later. Thirteen soldiers were executed for their involvement in these attacks and dozens more were arrested, establishing a strong warning for future soldiers thinking of attempting a coup.¹⁰

As a result of these direct threats against Stevens by members of the military he began to turn away from the organization in favour of the police and foreign military assistance. Stevens signed a defence agreement with Guinea that sent troops to Freetown to essentially guard Stevens against his own military. Additionally he negotiated with Cuba to train a paramilitary force called the Internal Security Unit (ISU).¹¹ The ISU became the most cared for, as well as most feared, part of the state's security apparatus and took on many of the missions previously given to the military.¹² From this point the Sierra Leone military took on a largely ceremonial role.¹³ The size of the military was intentionally kept small and little funding was available for updating equipment or training. As will soon be shown, this marginalization of the military severely affected the ability of the Sierra Leone army to counter rebel forces when they attacked in 1991.

At the same time that the vast majority of the military was cast aside, the top ranks had become more embedded in the political system. This culminated in Stevens' appointment of General Momoh to parliament in 1974.¹⁴ While Stevens saw the military as a potential risk to his rule, he was also strategic enough to know complete isolation of the military would increase this threat.

After seventeen years in power Stevens stepped down in 1985 and left General Momoh to lead the All Peoples' Congress (APC).¹⁵ That same year General Momoh won the general election, for which he was the only candidate.¹⁶ Momoh inherited a

⁹ Ibid., 147.

¹⁰ David Fasholé Luke, "Continuity in Sierra Leone: from Stevens to Momoh," *Third World Quarterly* 10, 1 (Jan 1988): 71.

¹¹ Later renamed the Special Security Division (SSD).

¹² Lansana Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa* (London: Hurst and Company, 2005): 29.

¹³ David Keen, *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone*, (New York: Palgrave, 2005): 17.

¹⁴ Turay and Abraham, *The Sierra Leone Army*, 161.

¹⁵ Luke, "Continuity in Sierra Leone: from Stevens to Momoh," 75-76.

¹⁶ William Reno, *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 153.

one-party state with a bankrupt treasury. Although once seen as a successful military leader, as a politician Momoh was largely viewed as an inept leader with a blind loyalty for Stevens.¹⁷ Momoh did little to change his reputation or the inherent corruption that riddled the state institutions. By 1990 Sierra Leone was ranked the poorest country in the world, despite the state's significant wealth of natural resources.¹⁸

By the late 1980s Sierra Leone, like other states throughout the continent, was under pressure to reduce government spending and as part of the austerity measures subsidies were cut.¹⁹ This had a widespread effect on the average citizen as the price of fuel increased by 300 percent and the cost of rice 180 percent between 1989 and 1990.²⁰ Additionally civil servants and teacher salaries often went unpaid and by the early 1990s much of the professional class had left the country.²¹ Around this same time Momoh encountered growing internal and external pressures to end the one-party political system.²² Student activists groups had become increasingly vocal in opposing Stevens and then Momoh. At least two of the officers (Lt. Tom Nyuma and Lt. Komba Mondeh) involved in the revolt in 1992 had been members of the activist group Pan African Union (PANAFU) and participated in rallies prior to joining the army.²³ Additionally, nearly every newspaper edition from roughly 1989 to 1991 featured details of corruption and government incompetence, which further eroded the confidence of citizens in the government.²⁴ The frustrations of the civilian population were not lost on the soldiers involved in the 1992 coup and they addressed many of these issues in their speeches explaining the reasons they took power.²⁵

¹⁷ John L. Hirsch, *Sierra Leone: Diamond and Struggle for Democracy*, (Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 2001): 30.

¹⁸ A. Zack-Williams and Stephen Riley, "Sierra Leone: The Coups and its Consequences," *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 56 (1993): 92.

¹⁹ Keen, *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone*, 26.

²⁰ Earl Conteh-Morgan and Mac Dixon-Fyle, *Sierra Leone at the End of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Lang Publishing, Inc., 1999): 125-126.

²¹ Hirsch, *Sierra Leone: Diamond and Struggle for Democracy*, 30.

²² Jimmy D. Kandeh, "In Search of Legitimacy: The 1996 Election," in *Between Democracy and Terror: The Sierra Leone Civil War*, ed. Ibrahim Abdullah (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2004): 125.

²³ Ismail Rashid, "Student Radicals, Lumpen Youth and Origins of Revolutionary Groups in Sierra Leone 1977-1996," in *Between Democracy and Terror: The Sierra Leone Civil War* ed. Ibrahim Abdullah (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2004): 84.

²⁴ Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa*, 37-38

²⁵ Transcripts of the speeches can be found in *West Africa*, May 11, 1992.

It was against this backdrop of economic failure and deep-seated anger at government inefficiency and corruption that the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) began their attack on Sierra Leone in 1991. The RUF was a rebel group headed by Foday Sankoh, a former corporal in the Sierra Leone army who had been arrested and discharged from the military for his alleged involvement in the coup attempt against Stevens in 1971.²⁶ When the RUF first attacked eastern Sierra Leone in March of 1991, President Momoh sent Sierra Leonean military units to the east to counter the attacks. Few of the soldiers had any combat experience and the majority of the unit was expected to switch from a largely ceremonial force to a combat capable unit almost overnight.

5.3 The Tigers are Tested

Among the units tasked with countering the RUF were the Tiger and Cobra units. The experiences of these units proved to be demoralizing and within a year of the beginning of the mission the units led a revolt against the government. This section will highlight the internal dynamics of the Tiger unit specifically, as the majority of the individuals involved in the revolt were from this unit (although there were also a smaller number of Cobras). Interviews with members of the unit will demonstrate their experiences on the battlefield and show where these soldiers found fault in the conditions of the mission.

By 1992, the army continued to “serve as a major instrument of patrimonial favour.”²⁷ The officers of the Tiger unit were not immune to this system. For example, Captain Strasser, a leader in the Tiger unit, was brought into the military by a former APC minister, Thaimu Bangura.²⁸ However, not all clients in a patronage system are equal and the leaders of the Tiger unit found themselves with much less political clout

²⁶ Keen, *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone*, 37; The RUF was closely linked to and supported by the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), led by Charles Taylor, which began attacking Liberian President Doe’s regime in 1989 and ultimately began the Liberian Civil War.

²⁷ Paul Richards, *Fighting For the Rain Forest: War Youth & Resources in Sierra Leone* (Oxford: James Currey, 1996): 23.

²⁸ Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa*, 70.

than their senior officers who had stronger ties to the ruling APC. The Tiger officers' assignment to the war front sharply contrasted with the comfortable postings and fringe benefits that the more senior officers stationed in Freetown received. Furthermore, the government kept the military intentionally small (estimated at 3,000-4,000) and therefore there was limited room for advancement.²⁹

The small size of the military combined with limited employment opportunities also made joining as an enlisted soldier a coveted opportunity. Individuals who were enlisted in the military in the late 1980s explained that they were able to join because a family member or friend gave them a card.³⁰ In other words, individuals needed to know someone in the system or with ties to the system to be accepted. This furthered the trend of loyalties to individuals rather than the military institution or state. There was weak adherence to the formalized military hierarchy amongst both the enlisted and officer ranks.

Prior to 1991, most soldiers, both officers and rank and file soldiers, had some type of connection, which earned them a place in the military. However this changed after the initial attacks by the RUF in 1991 when the government decided to quickly increase the size of the armed forces. By the end of 1991 the military had grown to an estimated 7,000 personnel.³¹ However in their haste to boost personnel the recruits were quickly processed and minimally trained before given their assignments, some of whom were sent to join the Tiger unit. Many of the rank and file Tiger interviewees explained being right out of basic training at the time of the revolt. One individual explained that he was still in his initial training when news broke of a rebel attack. He recalled, "So that day they gather us, distributed weapons to us, and that very day we deploy to Sanga. At that time, I [did not know much] about the army."³² Another soldier highlighted the lack of proper training by stating, "at the time I never knew my role. In 1991 to 1998 I never knew the roles of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces. It is only now that I know our roles and responsibilities."³³ It is likely that for many of these young soldiers

²⁹ Keen, *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone*, 83.

³⁰ Based on author interviews with soldiers in Sierra Leone, 2011 and 2012.

³¹ Keen, *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone*, 87.

³² Author interview with military source N (current enlisted soldier), April 2012.

³³ Author interview with military source Q (current officer, enlisted rank in 1992), May 2011.

their military experience was limited to this one unit. Their officers in the Tiger unit were the only military leadership they had worked under.

In many ways this was a unit with few ties to the larger military structure, operating in a location and under conditions isolated from the rest of the military. The rank and file soldiers had a strong loyalty to their unit leadership, which seemed to develop around the hardship conditions. When asked about Captain Strasser's traits as a leader of the Tiger unit one of his subordinates explained that he was a good commander "because he had foresight, he used to encourage us in terms of difficulty, when we have casualty he sit around and sympathize with us. He used to take money from his pocket to buy marijuana, to motivate you."³⁴ Another rank and file member of the unit recalled Strasser "was a good military leader because he always take care of us, always try to order equipment for us, have our rations on time."³⁵ The enlisted soldiers described Lieutenant Musa, another leader of the unit, similarly with statements such as "He cared about everybody, how they are doing."³⁶ These quotes show that the enlisted soldiers' high esteem for their immediate supervisors was personal; they viewed them as being responsible for their basic needs and in many ways their lives. No interviewee ever mentioned any particular military skills as a reason for their respect for their leaders. The emphasis on the personal bonds with their officers was in contrast to how many saw the senior hierarchy in Freetown, whom they had no contact with, no commonalities, and no reason to trust. For example, one rank and file soldier discussing senior leadership exclaimed "In those days we are having leaders who just do things on their own...they never come down and see the ordinary soldier. You never see a commander."³⁷ When the officers of the Tiger unit proposed a mutiny it is likely that the rank and file soldiers saw the action less as an attack on the larger chain of command and more as a act of loyalty and solidarity to the only chain of command that they really knew.

³⁴ Author interview with military source Q (current officer, enlisted rank in 1992), May 2011.

³⁵ Author interview with military source H (current enlisted soldier), May 2011.

³⁶ Author interview with military source S (current enlisted soldier), April 2012.

³⁷ Author interview with military source Q (current officer, enlisted rank in 1992), May 2011. The soldier made this statement in the context that the enlisted ranks now have much more regular contact with officers of all levels.

Additionally, there was little difference in background or qualifications between many of the junior officers and the enlisted soldiers serving under them. None of the officers or enlisted soldiers I spoke to had higher education at the time they joined the military. Several of the rank and file soldiers spoke of their personal relationships with the officers in the unit, whom they knew prior to joining the military. One rank and file soldier from the Tiger unit explained that an officer in the unit was, and still is, his “very best friend.”³⁸ They were raised in the same region, joined the military together, and have both served ever since. He explained that despite their similar backgrounds, the officer had a brother in the military and thus received an officer commission. These types of stories show that in many cases the distinctions between junior officers and enlisted were minimal in terms of background, education, age or experience.

The Tigers were not an elite unit per se but had a honourable reputation within the military as one of the few “battle-tested” units in Sierra Leone. In addition to distinguishing themselves by their combat experiences, the unit wore different scarves from the rest of the military as an expression of their unit identity. One soldier fondly told me that after the coup all the civilian youth “wanted to be a Tiger, everyone was wearing our muffler.”³⁹ However, the current military leadership may have realized that creating a separate identity within the military had negative effects and has since stopped using titles such as “Tigers” and “Cobras.” While on various bases in Sierra Leone I was at times reprimanded by soldiers when asking if they had been a part of those units. For example, one soldier told me “we don’t use those names anymore, they are divisive.”⁴⁰

Members of the unit were from all parts of the country although Freetown was the area most highly represented in the unit, a trait that made the soldiers especially popular among Freetown youth when they came to power. Their bond was thus not one based on shared ethnicity or regional background but rather formed through shared experiences on deployment. Like most units deployed together, the Tigers spent large amounts of time together, both downtime and moments of danger, in an environment

³⁸ Author interview with military source S (current enlisted soldier), April 2012.

³⁹ Author interview with military source S (current enlisted soldier), May 2011.

⁴⁰ Author casual conversation with soldier, April 2012.

isolated from much of the hierarchy. Their group provides a strong example of the potential for increased unit cohesion as a result of deployments, as described in Chapter Four.

The strong group cohesion that formed within the Tigers was necessary for survival as the decades of intentional neglect in updating the military quickly took its toll on the mission. The units on the eastern border did not have the weapons, equipment, or training to adequately engage with the RUF. Even the Commander of the Sierra Leone military at the time admitted years later that the military and political leadership did not adequately prepare for the RUF rebellion. He states

I will confess that at the time the rebels started in March 1991, we were really caught with our pants down. The strength of the army was small-a little above the colonial legacy- and arms and logistics inadequate, all a result of the economic difficulties the country had been enduring through over the years.⁴¹

Similarly, in a testimony to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2003 Brigadier (Ret.) Conteh explained that at the time, the army was operating with less than thirty percent of its transportation needs, less than twenty percent of its support equipment and that much essential equipment was non-existent.⁴²

It had long been the government's policy to limit soldiers' access to ammunition, out of fear that they would use it in a coup attempt.⁴³ While this policy is understandable in times of peace, it was life threatening in war. Soldiers recall constantly being short on ammunition while battling the rebels. One soldier explained, "When we were fighting we were only given 20 rounds, rebels were using hundreds a day."⁴⁴ Another member of the unit had a similar complaint stating, "Before 1992 we were not well catered for, you have 20 rounds, they only give you 20 rounds of ammunition to challenge a whole enemy who will come with everything they have."⁴⁵

⁴¹ *West Africa* April 3, 1995, 498-499.

⁴² Brigadier (Retired) Kellie H. Conteh, testimony before TRC hearing held in Freetown, June 2003, quoted in Mohamed Sesay, "Military Reform and Post-Conflict Peace Building in Sierra Leone," 2009 MPhil, Fourah Bay College.

⁴³ *New African*, June 1992, 18.

⁴⁴ Author interview with military source L (current enlisted soldier), May 2011.

⁴⁵ Author interview with military source S (current enlisted soldier), April 2012.

Furthermore, the weapons issued were not conducive to the fight. For example, Strasser explained that the unit was using mortars from 1962, many of which did not fire.⁴⁶ Media reports at the time note that the Sierra Leone soldiers, with bolt-action, breech-loading rifles, had no chance against the rebels with automatic weapons.⁴⁷ An officer in the unit explained, "In 1991 when the war broke out, at that time the military was nothing to talk about. When we started with the RUF, soldiers are just using rifle, no AK47, no RPG, no mortar."⁴⁸ Additionally, there was a limited supply of vehicles and soldiers lacked basics such as socks and boots.⁴⁹ As the conflict dragged on there was irregular and inadequate resupply. Soldiers explained that their food rations were limited, some stating that at times they had no food. The units experienced several casualties and for those that survived little medical attention was available. This concern was particularly personal to Strasser who was injured by shrapnel from rebel-fired mortars.⁵⁰ Strasser explained, "the worst part was there were no paramedics, no drugs, no blood."⁵¹

Soldiers were clearly disgruntled about being inadequately trained, underfed, poorly equipped, and having no medical attention while tasked at fighting rebels in a jungle environment. These grievances were compounded by the fact that the unit was not paid for months on end. Every soldier interviewed commented on the pay issue. Even when they were paid, the soldiers found the salary to be offensively low for the risks they were taking. These complaints demonstrate the altered expectations that often form on deployments, as discussed in the previous chapter.

The pay issue became especially suspicious when President Momoh publicly announced that his government was spending 1.2 billion leones a month (US \$2 million) on rations and logistics for the war.⁵² The stark contrast between Momoh's statement and the reality for the soldiers on the ground led many soldiers to believe that the money

⁴⁶ *West Africa*, June 15, 1992, 1002.

⁴⁷ *New African*, June 1992, 18.

⁴⁸ Author interview with military source I (current officer), May 2011.

⁴⁹ Author interview with Valentine Strasser, May 2011.

⁵⁰ *West Africa*, June 15, 1992, 1002.

⁵¹ Author interview with Valentine Strasser, May 2011.

⁵² *West Africa*, May 11, 1992, 788; A. Zack-Williams and S. Riley, "Sierra Leone: The Coups and its Consequences," 94.

meant for them was actually being diverted into the pockets of the politicians and military leaders at the top. In their minds, not only were they suffering the hardships of war, but others were profiting from it, which created a strong sense of injustice. This issue of perceived corruption was mirrored in the civilian population who were also expressing anger at government corruption.

5.4 From Objections to Actions

The tough conditions on the eastern front are largely uncontested in media and academic writing and the bitterness of the soldiers towards their situation was understandable. However, nearly all published accounts fail to explain how the unit decided to take their complaints to the capital and how they executed their plan. These are details worth examining more closely as they can help explain how a mutiny forms at a tactical level.

Many media and academic reports on the events of April 29, 1992 describe it as a mutiny or a protest.⁵³ The popularly told story is that the soldiers fighting on the eastern front were fed up with the conditions, as listed above, and decided to voice their complaints to the government in the form of a protest at State House.⁵⁴ Some accounts describe how the unit sat down with President Momoh but when the negotiations did not go in the soldiers favour, they rebelled. Media within Sierra Leone took the stance that it was because the government refused to meet with the soldiers that they became angrier and escalated their plan from a strike to a coup.⁵⁵

The account I received while interviewing the soldiers is a more nuanced story. The officers leading the supposed mutiny assert they never planned to negotiate with

⁵³ Several of these publications include Arthur Abraham "State Complicity as a Factor in Perpetuating the Sierra Leone Civil War," in *Between Democracy and Terror: The Sierra Leone Civil War*, ed. Ibrahim Abdullah (Dakar: Codesria, 2004): 105; Hirsch, *Sierra Leone: Diamond and Struggle for Democracy*, 32; Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa*, 68; Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth & Resources in Sierra Leone*, 9.

⁵⁴ Hirsch, *Sierra Leone: Diamond and Struggle for Democracy*, 32.

⁵⁵ Several of these accounts include *Daily Mail*, May 4, 1992, *Rural Post*, June 1992, and *Progress*, May 9, 1992.

political leaders; their goal from the start was to overthrow the government. However the enlisted soldiers explained that they firmly believed they were going to the capital to protest their payments and conditions. They were told by the officers at the last minute that rather than strike, the order was to attack.

The Tiger unit was based in Kailahun while the Cobras were in Kenema but the officers occasionally met at a bar near the Daru headquarters to discuss the war situation. It was over drinks at this local establishment that the officers hatched their plans.⁵⁶ In an interview with Strasser he explained that he and the other officers had been planning the coup for a year. I commented that a year was a long time to keep the plan a secret and asked how he knew whom to trust. He replied “Yes, it was a problem, if it got out we would end in death. The ones that saw the problems first hand, that were deployed together, they could be trusted.”⁵⁷ Strasser’s quote confirms the close relationship that these soldiers shared as a result of their time together in combat. Despite Strasser’s statement about trusting those he deployed with, the officers were cautious about letting too many in on the plan, in particular the rank and file soldiers. Instead, the officers proposed to the soldiers a mutiny. They laid out the common grievances and suggested they all go together to Freetown to protest their conditions and demand their overdue salaries.

When recounting the discussion that proposed the idea to mutiny, the rank and file soldiers seemed unsure as to whether it was a personal decision by each soldier or an order by officers. One soldier said, “it was not an order, just a conversation between everybody. And they say who wants to go and most of us say we are going.”⁵⁸ However, others explained that they were told to get in a truck (by Lt. Tom Nyuma specifically) and only found out later where they were going.⁵⁹ Considering soldiers came from different units (Tigers and Cobras), it is possible that both stories are

⁵⁶ This narrative was told by several different interviewees. Additionally there appears to be a local story which claims that after the officers came to power they paid the bar owner to close the establishment. Some said it was because it was a sacred place for the soldiers, others said it was so that other soldiers in the region could not meet there and develop similar plans.

⁵⁷ Author interview with Valentine Strasser, May 2011.

⁵⁸ Author interview with military source T (current enlisted soldier), May 2011.

⁵⁹ Author interview with military source N (current enlisted soldier), April 2012.

accurate. Several soldiers note that the only person to say no, a fellow officer, was arrested on the spot. A Corporal from the unit recounted that

only one Major... in Kenema, refused to join. So he was arrested by the officers. He refused to join, he said soldiers don't strike, when soldiers strike is becomes coup. And that is why he refused to join, so he was arrested and loaded into the truck and came with us.⁶⁰

Considering the circumstances of the arrested Major, it is unlikely that any of the rank and file soldiers would have refused to take part. Still, the soldiers that were interviewed all seemed to support the idea of a mutiny. The fact that the arrested soldier was a Major is significant, as it means he outranked the other officers present. His arrest by his subordinates is the first act of mutiny in the unit. It illustrates the bond between the enlisted soldiers and the junior officers (Captains and below). The rank and file soldiers appear to support the junior officers rather than the senior officer present.

When asked if they knew the mission to Freetown was designed to overthrow the government the enlisted soldiers all gave similar variations of "no."

Ration was low on the war front, salary was so small so this is why they say let's go to Freetown and arrest the officers. But we don't know it was a coup, later the mission changed.

Well initially we never knew what was going to happen. When we reached Freetown we were told "gentlemen this is a life or death mission, be prepared to fight." We did our best and we succeeded.

No, we did not know it was going to be a coup, we thought it would be a strike action.

We did not know any motive.

No, they don't tell us that. They don't inform anybody about a coup.

I was surprised! Because that was not the mission I heard about. I heard about the rations.

⁶⁰ Author interview with military source T (current enlisted soldier), May 2011; This story was verified by numerous sources although there were variations in the name of the Major.

We were fighting, no proper medication, not enough rations, because of that the commanders organized that we would go to Freetown to ask for those.

At that time our wives and relatives are staying down in Freetown and are not getting our rations, like rice. Salaries we are not getting in time. We decided we should come down and ask for those things. Not knowing that it was a coup to topple APC.

The officers confirm that they used deceptive tactics to convince the enlisted soldiers to participate. An officer explained

When we left Daru nobody knew what was the intention...it was a hidden agenda to overthrow the APC government. They say they are going to demand salaries but actually the hidden intent behind the whole issue was to overthrow the government.⁶¹

The disconnect between the account of the officers and those of the rank and file raises questions as to whether the mission was an 'accidental' coup or whether the officers simply did not want to tell the rank and file the real intention. The officers insist that the latter is the case. Successful coups rely on secrecy and it is possible that they were attempting to limit the number of people who knew the plan.⁶² Additionally, if the overthrow failed they could claim their actions were just a mutiny, which is a lesser crime than a coup within a military court martial.

Despite the officers' misleading tactics towards their subordinates, the proposed mutiny shows trust between the ranks of this particular unit. Organizing a mutiny could have meant arrests or worse for the officers if any soldier had informed the senior military hierarchy. Three days passed between when the enlisted soldiers were informed of the plan to mutiny and when the revolt actually occurred, giving ample time for any of them to inform others. Furthermore, those that stayed in the east were also aware that their colleagues went to Freetown for the stated goal of making demands to the top military hierarchy.⁶³ Despite all these soldiers knowing the plan and knowing it was illegal under military law, it appears no one leaked the secret as the soldiers stationed in Freetown admit to being completely surprised. It is also possible that the lack of

⁶¹ Author interview with military source P (current officer), May 2011.

⁶² First, *Barrel of a Gun*, 19; Kande, *Coups From Below*, 43.

⁶³ Based on author interviews and casual conversations, Sierra Leone 2011 and 2012.

operational information leaks had to do with a lack of cell phones and radios at the time. This type of secret would likely be harder to keep with today's technology.

5.5 Operation Mutiny Turns Operation Coup

Academic and media reporting tends to downplay the logistics involved in this operation, often stating the soldiers marched to the capital.⁶⁴ The image of soldiers marching to Freetown to demand their wages portrays the soldiers in the fashion of union members or civilian groups who similarly held processions in the capital for their causes. However, this detail is not accurate nor would it have been possible for the soldiers to march the 250-mile distance. The top logistical concern was how to get from their location in eastern Sierra Leone to the capital, a long route made especially time consuming given the poor road infrastructure. The soldiers were aware that their plan might not be supported by all of the military and were especially concerned about the checkpoints. A group of fifty soldiers arriving at any checkpoint would cause suspicion. They explained that some members of the unit travelled together in military vehicles and attire with a ready story that they were travelling to Freetown to report on the logistics concerns on the warfront. Another version of the story was that they were travelling with their weapons to have them repaired in Freetown. The majority wore civilian clothes and travelled in stolen civilian vehicles in order to not raise alarm.⁶⁵

The unit met up on the outskirts of Freetown on roughly April 26th. While they initially had planned to conduct the revolt the next day, plans were changed when they realized there were festivities planned in the capital. April 27th is Sierra Leone's Independence Day and the soldiers did not want to involve civilians. The officers rescheduled the mission for April 29th. This was one of the several points in which the soldiers seemed aware and concerned about how civilians would perceive their actions. Another example is that they conducted the attack early in the morning when less people would be on the streets. However this had a strategic aspect as well since less people

⁶⁴ Reno, *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone*, 174.

⁶⁵ Based on author interviews, Sierra Leone 2011 and 2012.

meant less vehicle or foot traffic to obscure the routes and fewer people to notice irregular military movements.

The responsibilities for securing vehicles and ammunition were divided between various officers. Their plan involved capturing six key locations throughout the city. An officer from the unit explained,

The first step was State House, the first attack was State House. The second Ugun Roundabout, the third site was the Pademba Road prison. The fourth site was the radio station, the fifth was the military head quarters, and the sixth was FBC (Fourah Bay College).⁶⁶

The soldiers never had to enact the full six steps as the government toppled almost immediately at State House. However, the plan suggests that the officers were never intending to mutiny; they were geared for a full attack. True to their war experiences, the officers concocted a military plan that covered major strategic locations as well as a primary entry and exit point of the city.

Even upon entering Freetown on the morning of April 29th, the rank and file soldiers still thought they were going to hold a protest. They found out the real plan as they approached State House. A rank and file soldier in the unit explained

To our surprise they tell us we are to attack State House. We start asking ourselves what are we here for. They tell us we are to ask for our rations and now they say we are to attack State House. But we are young soldiers and we work for our commanders.⁶⁷

Several other soldiers provided similar accounts. The enlisted soldiers explained their surprise and fear at the sudden escalation in plans. When asked what he thought about the order to attack State House one enlisted soldier animatedly said

I wanted to run away but there was no way...I was a young soldier and it is a big thing, a coup. When someone says 'coup' I think 'AHHHH' (exclaiming surprise and fear), you see? But it was a command, if I ran away I would be arrested. It was do or die, you see?⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Author interview with military source P (current officer), May 2011.

⁶⁷ Author interview with military source Y (current enlisted soldier), May 2011.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

This individual felt little concern over the plan to mutiny but found the coup idea much more serious and stressful, suggesting that there is a clear distinction between the two events in the eyes of soldiers.

Despite the shock of the order, the soldiers obeyed and fired on State House and into the air. Additionally, they used rocket-propelled grenades. Media reports noted the weapons used during the attack and questioned whether the soldiers were really as ill equipped as they claimed. However, soldiers interviewed alleged they acquired the better weapons upon arriving in Freetown. Everyone interviewed, including soldiers stationed in Freetown during the time, agreed that the attack came as a complete surprise. A soldier involved in the attack recounts

We crawled right up to the main gate at State House. We fired, the town soldiers were not used to that sound, it was their first time to hear that weapon, so they started running. We chased them and seized them and distributed their ammunition. That is how we are able to capture State House that day.⁶⁹

Another soldier puts it more bluntly by saying “The Freetown soldiers are cowards, that is how we are able to win.”⁷⁰ The language used by these soldiers demonstrates the way in which the Tigers differentiated themselves from soldiers who had not deployed, a trait common in deployed units and a trend discussed in relation to honour in the previous chapter. Although all in the same organization, the members of the Tiger unit called the other soldiers “town soldiers” and discussed their inexperience with weapons and perceived lack of bravery.

There were small pockets of resistance but the majority of the soldiers guarding State House did not stick around to fight. Even the revered SSD (formerly known as ISU) did not counter the attack.⁷¹ By mid afternoon on April 29, 1992 Captain Strasser came on the national radio and announced the overthrow of President Momoh. This was the first time the majority of Sierra Leoneans had heard of Strasser. Although initially part of the Tigers, he had been moved to Freetown due to his injury on the warfront.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Author interview with military source L (current enlisted soldier), May 2011.

⁷¹ Keen, *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone*, 94.

Therefore, he did not travel with the troops from the east. Strasser was however involved in the early planning and possibly coordination on the day of the attack.

In many ways Strasser was not the likely candidate for leading the coup or junta that followed. First, he was not the brains behind the plan, as explained by the officers involved. That title went to Lt. "Saj" Musa who one soldier explained was "the whole machine behind it" and another soldier called "the mastermind." Furthermore, Strasser did not have a distinctive educational background or any international experience (short of his time with ECOMOG in Liberia). He is never described as charismatic or well spoken. Strasser was not from a prominent family and at twenty-seven years old he certainly did not have age on his side. Every individual, including Strasser, explained that the reason he was chosen as leader was due to his rank, which was the highest among the junior officers involved. Had they chosen a leader based on charisma, popularity, or leadership skills their choice would probably have been Musa (who became Vice President under the military junta).⁷² The adherence to military hierarchy in selecting the junta leader, as well as the obedience of the rank and file towards their immediate supervisors during the revolt, are an examples of what Robin Luckham calls the "remarkable power of military norms in the midst of revolt."⁷³ The soldiers were breaking many norms within military doctrine but did not seem comfortable acting outside of the chain of command within their own group.

In contrast to the media reports at the time, the soldiers never sat down with President Momoh to discuss their complaints, nor does it appear that the officers wanted to. One of the officers explained

President Momoh, wanted to prey on the weak. We are from the warfront, we are battle-tested officers, we have tasted the bitterness of war. This is not a tribal mark (showing a large scar on his chest), this is a gun mark. For anything we do we will have to pay the price and the price

⁷² Musa was a figure that the rank and file rallied around until his death in battle in 1998 and was by far the individual that the interviewees, regardless of rank, spoke the most about and the most highly about. He appeared in the post-coup newspaper reporting more often than Strasser and was nicknamed the "Action Man" in the press due to the many initiatives he led under the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC).

⁷³ Robin Luckham, *The Nigerian Military: A Sociological Analysis of Authority and Revolt, 1960-1967*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971): 83.

will be life. So we don't have to compromise. When we enter the city we do not have to compromise on anything again.⁷⁴

His statement shows a heightened sense of entitlement based on the hardships endured in the combat mission against the RUF. There is a clear sense of superiority due to the dangers undergone.

The plan as explained by the officers above as well as Strasser's admission that the idea had been in the works for a year, counters popular media and academic accounts that claimed the revolt was accidental, spontaneous and disorganized.⁷⁵ It is possible to take a more cynical look at the officers' accounts and argue that out of pride they would be unlikely to admit if the coup was an accident. However, if the officers are recreating the narrative, they have at least been consistent with doing so as the story Strasser told me in 2011 is the same he told the media days after the event.⁷⁶

5.6 "A Change that Changed Little"⁷⁷

The coup was widely supported by the civilian population in Sierra Leone. The soldiers showed they were aware of the widespread civilian complaints and claimed their actions were largely in response to the call for change, rather than a response to their own poor conditions. This made them widely popular and gave Strasser the nickname "The Redeemer." The one-party state had long fallen out of favour and the young military officers were expected to bring new life to the system through their creation of the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC). Strasser's first speech to the public, made over the radio a day after the coup, used strong populist rhetoric and caused many to compare him to other regional revolutionaries such as Lieutenant

⁷⁴ Author interview with military source I (current officer), May 2011.

⁷⁵ Several such accounts include *West Africa*, June 29 1992, Robert Edgerton, *African Armies: From Honor to Infamy*, (Cambridge: Westview Press, 2002): 164; A. Zack-Williams and S. Riley, "Sierra Leone: The Coups and its Consequences," 92.

⁷⁶ The one year time frame for the coup plan is consistent with descriptions given by Strasser to the media immediately after the coup, as quoted in *West Africa* June 11, 1992.

⁷⁷ First, *Barrel of a Gun*, 22.

Rawlings of Ghana or Captain Sankara of Burkina Faso.⁷⁸ However, these were comparisons he was never able to live up to and “the NPRC did not represent a significant divergence from the regime it replaced.”⁷⁹

Initially after the coup, Strasser and other top members of the junta were treated as heroes. Their style was imitated by youth throughout the country and portraits of them were painted in the form of street art throughout the capital.⁸⁰ Although the enlisted soldiers were deceived about the goal of the mission, none interviewed appeared bitter about it and several commented on feeling fortunate to be a part of overthrowing Momoh. Several of the rank and file soldiers from the Tiger unit noted that they received immediate rewards for their involvement in the form of larger salaries and new postings in the capital. However, this caused further divides in the military as the majority of the top jobs and associated benefits went to the Tiger rank and file soldiers.⁸¹ Thus, a similar pattern that the Tigers had objected to was recreated when the NPRC came to power, only they were now the resented Freetown privileged.

Most members of the Tigers felt that their leadership failed to make lasting changes for the military. One member of the unit explained, “Some issues got better, some did not. Like one of the promises that was made by the NPRC was that they would provide accommodations for the soldiers, they were not able to.”⁸² When asked what the benefits were for the military after the NPRC came to power a rank and file soldier responded

No benefits. Because they never succeeded. When they took office they said the number one priority is to end the war and that was not done. The second one was to alleviate poverty, that was not done. The third is to bring the Sierra Leone army to standard welfare, in terms of training, logistics, and that was not achieved. So by this way, nothing was achieved.⁸³

⁷⁸ *West Africa*, May 11 1992.

⁷⁹ Rashid, “Student Radicals, Lumpen Youth and Origins of Revolutionary Groups in Sierra Leone 1977-1996,” 85.

⁸⁰ Joseph A. Opala, “‘Ecstatic Renovation!’: Street Art Celebrating Sierra Leone’s 1992 Revolution,” *African Affairs* 93, 371 (Apr., 1994): 195-218.

⁸¹ Keen, *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone*, 108.

⁸² Author interview with military source P (current officer), May 2011.

⁸³ Author interview with military source Q (current officer but enlisted soldier in 1992), May 2011.

Although most soldiers agreed that in the long run they were disappointed with the lack of military changes made by the NPRC, they seemed conflicted on whom to blame for the unfulfilled promises.⁸⁴ When soldiers talked about their grievances while in the east, they were unified in pointing the finger at Momoh. Yet, when similar grievances were expressed under the NPRC they were often reluctant to blame their former unit leaders. Some were clear in stating that the decisions rested with Strasser yet others continued to blame civilian politicians, stating that "Strasser was used by politicians."⁸⁵ Another excused the junta's behaviour by stating "it is because they are inexperienced. They are just junior military officers, none of them are graduates and they took some old politicians to advise them and they were given bad advice."⁸⁶ Many of the soldiers noted their personal sacrifice during the mission to bring the NPRC to power and took the lack of continued benefits as an insult. Yet, still they seemed hesitant to criticize one of their own. An interview with a rank and file member of the unit exemplifies this point.

Author: What were the benefits for your unit after the coup?

Soldier: There were no benefits. In fact, Strasser deserted those that came to Freetown. Yes, he sidelined us. He sidelined us. Those that sacrificed their lives. We laid down our lives! But actually he was a good leader.

Author: That seems contradictory to the statement about him sidelining you.

Soldier: Well yes but it was the other officers that were the problem. They failed to come down to our level and check. If he had come down and check he would notice what was going on.⁸⁷

With the politicians out of the picture the unit no longer had a common antagonist to rally against. When the revolt began the unit was a cohesive group with communal complaints. When the coup was successful some of the unit were among the most powerful in the country while the majority were left with little to show for their

⁸⁴ Strasser was one of the only interviewees who had a long list of achievements by the NPRC.

⁸⁵ Author interview with military source L (current enlisted soldier), May 2011.

⁸⁶ Author interview with military source Q (current officer but enlisted soldier in 1992), May 2011.

⁸⁷ Author interview with military source Y (current enlisted soldier), May 2011.

efforts. These divisions took root and festered and as the years of NPRC rule carried on, the officers began to turn on one another.

In 1996 Strasser's junta arrested him, and forced him out of the country. This internal coup was led by Lieutenant Madaa Bio one of the officers involved in carrying out the 1992 coup alongside Strasser. Bio gave in to popular demands for democratic elections, which brought an end to the NPRC after four years in power.⁸⁸

Ahmed Kabbah won the 1996 election, although it was contested by the fact that many areas were too unstable to carry out voting. President Kabbah placed greater importance on civilian militias, called kamajors, to fight the rebels when it became clear that the military was failing at the job.⁸⁹ Kabbah expressed a clear distrust of the military, an extension of previous civilian attitudes towards the military as well as a result of the behaviour of soldiers during the NPRC. The 1992 coup served as further evidence in the mind of politicians, such as Kabbah, that the military could not be trusted and thus created an additional divide and rivalry between the civilian government and the military. The military went from being the centre of power under the NPRC to fearing that the military as an institution would be disbanded and replaced with the kamajors.⁹⁰ Furthermore, the kamajors and military were often in direct combat against each other.

It did not take long for the military to reassert their power and just fourteen months after the elections, the military was back in control, this time through a coup led by a military football team. One soldier explained that directly prior to the 1997 coup soldiers "were so angry that a single person could incite the entire military."⁹¹ The anger and frustrations of the military was unleashed when the soldiers released the prisoners from Pademba Road prison who then ran rampant through the streets of Freetown alongside disgruntled military members.⁹² Whereas the soldiers interviewed were generally comfortable, and in some ways even proud, when talking about the 1992

⁸⁸ Kandeh, "In Search of Legitimacy: The 1996 Election," 129.

⁸⁹ Abraham "State Complicity as a Factor in Perpetuating the Sierra Leone Civil War," 119.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Author interview with military source S (current enlisted soldier), May 2011.

⁹² Kandeh, *Coups from Below*, 169-174; Lansana Gberie, "The 25 May Coup d'état in Sierra Leone: A Lumpen Revolt?" in *Between Democracy and Terror: The Sierra Leone Civil War*, ed. Ibrahim Abdullah (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2004), 147.

incident, the entire tone changed with the mention of 1997. No one wanted to admit to having any role in that event and no one attempted to justify it. One officer passionately stated “If I want to be sincere within myself, I will pray to the almighty that that event would not be repeated. It was the worst we have ever seen. What we struggled for for the last 10-15 years was lost...everything was lost.”⁹³

Whereas in 1992 there was a level of discipline and structure within the Tiger unit’s revolt, the military hierarchy by 1997 had completely broken down. It is possible to see the 1992 events as setting the stage for 1997. The coup in 1992 created further division in the already fractured military and further complicated the role of the military in the state. Not only did the NPRC not address the problems that initially brought them to the capital, but they also allowed the problems to escalate. The breakdown of hierarchy, roles, and order within the military, which began with the 1992 revolt reached its climax in the 1997 coup.

5.7 A New Military with New Problems

In many ways the revolt in 1992 was largely linked to the context of the unit, the political situation at the time, and a military history in which official structures and procedures were often undermined by personal patronage systems. This section will show that while much has changed in Sierra Leone since 1992, soldiers today still see mutiny as a potential option for addressing their grievances.⁹⁴ Furthermore, the move towards democracy may actually have heighten the risk of mutiny in Sierra Leone.

Following the end of the civil war in 2002 much internal and international attention was placed on restructuring and professionalizing the military.⁹⁵ An important part of the restructuring of the armed forces was integrating various elements of the military and rebels forces into one organization. The program has been considered a

⁹³ Author interview with military source P (current officer), May 2011.

⁹⁴ Identification of the sources of interviewees who provided details on a potential future mutiny will be kept confidential due to the sensitivity of the topic. Information about future mutinies was provided to me in both 2011 and 2012.

⁹⁵ The largest contribution to this effort was the UK International Military Training and Advisory Team (IMATT), which provided training and assistance to the Sierra Leone Armed Forces for nearly twelve years (2002-2013).

success story and the soldiers themselves seemed proud of it. For example an officer involved in the events in 1992 explained

Today if you are asking you don't know who is RUF in the army. You don't know who is West Side in this army.⁹⁶ Today you don't know who is kamajor in this army. You don't know who is old soldier. What they did was take the RUF and train them, they restructure, they say you are no longer RUF, you are a soldier. Anyone call you a kamajor you may complain. West Side boys you are no longer West Side, you are soldiers. So today all of us are in this national army, there is no problem. We are all soldiers now so let bygones be bygones. We are all brothers.⁹⁷

Nearly every soldier commented that the conditions in the military today were much better than those in 1992. However the officer's statement above may have been overly optimistic when claiming there are no problems today. With some time, soldiers began to open up and express that below the surface tensions were building. The most resounding complaint was over accommodations, which was not particular to one specific base or region. Those living in base accommodations generally found them to be below par; however the bigger problem was the housing shortage. One officer explained that seventy-five percent of the soldiers, mostly rank and file, live outside the bases due to the shortage.⁹⁸ Several junior soldiers living off base commented that they endure added expenses and time to get between home and work each day. Whereas the accommodation complaint on its own may not be enough to trigger a revolt, such widespread dissatisfaction could be used to further recent claims of military mismanagement or neglect for the lower ranks.

In addition to these general complaints about accommodation, there were more specific grievances from rank and file soldiers about peacekeeping pay. The soldiers explained what the UN pays the government of Sierra Leone per soldier is much less than what the individual soldiers receive. They further explained their outrage at an informal system in which they claim soldiers are expected to pay roughly ten percent of their deployment salary from the mission up the chain of command as gratitude for

⁹⁶ West Side boys was a notorious gang/rebel group

⁹⁷ Author interview with military source I (current officer), May 2011.

⁹⁸ Author interview with military source M (current officer), April 2012.

assigning them to the mission. They claimed that if they refused to pay they would be passed over for promotions or other opportunities in the future.

The primary complaint amongst these soldiers is pay-related; however the concerns quickly took on the larger issue of corruption. The interviewees had calculated what they believed the government was making from the UN missions and explained that they did not know where that money was going. The soldiers accused the senior officers of “not doing anything, not buying uniforms, not buying medicine for soldiers. They are not helping those that are representing us in Darfur.” They went on to explain that the top officers were driving cars that would cost three quarters of their salary and proposed the question “where did they get the money?” The implied answer was at the expense of the soldiers participating in the UN missions. Another soldier was more frank by saying “They are taking the money and doing what they want with the money. They are enriching themselves.”

Two soldiers interviewed together explained that if the problems are not resolved they could “sense something like a mutiny in the near future.” When asked who they felt was to blame for the payment problem one soldier stated, “It is just the seniors (officers). But the young ones will copy, maybe even they get worse. But if we set an example, we make them (junior officers) afraid that we will do the same to them.” Their plan involved arresting senior officers and bringing their complaints to the government. In the below interview excerpt a rank and file soldier explains the goal:

Soldier: There will be no violence. We just want to arrest those we suppose and hand them over. We want to expose them.

Author: Expose them for what?

Soldier: For embezzlement of government money. They are just eating this money. We want to expose them, to expose them so others do not do the same. If we do not do this in the future we will go back to where we came from. We will go back to war, back to revolutions. We do not go again to where we came from. But if you expose them, you bring them to justice, they punish them for that.

To these enlisted soldiers, there was more to gain in a mutiny than just pay. They believed a mutiny would discipline the officers and have a long-term impact. These soldiers never spoke of changing the system or promoting themselves. They actually seemed to have faith in the concept of military hierarchy and had a clear idea of how an officer “should” behave. They were upset that the accused officers were not upholding the responsibilities of that position. Their statements support the idea proposed in past chapters that mutineers often see themselves as policing the officer corps.

Soldiers explained they have already brought their concerns to the government. One rank and file interviewee noted that a group of soldiers “wrote a letter secretly with no names,” informing the government of their accusations of corruption within the officer corps. This letter is confirmed in a leaked U.S. Embassy report which states that the soldiers accused the Minister of Defence and other senior officers of making promotions based on favouritism, theft of government resources, and embezzlement of funds meant for the welfare of soldiers. The letter claimed to represent 850 officers and rank and file soldiers and ended by stating, “when all fails, please do not be surprised to see us seeking justice in our own way.” According to the embassy report, the Minister of Defence dismissed the letter as “just a bit of mischief” but it created an uncomfortable atmosphere within the Ministry due to the allegations.⁹⁹ A rank and file interviewee also noted that a delegation of soldiers met with the Ministry of Defence about the problems but he insisted that the problems have persisted and soldiers are losing patience.

The pending mutiny that soldiers discussed in interviews in 2011 and 2012 appeared to come closer to fruition in 2013. In August of 2013 the government announced the arrest of a group of soldiers at the barracks in Makeni for plotting a mutiny.¹⁰⁰ Reports indicate that the soldiers were planning to protest during the president’s visit but his trip was cancelled when intelligence discovered the plan. Of the soldiers arrested for conspiracy of intended mutiny, the vast majority were rank and file soldiers with some reports claiming either an officer or an NCO was also involved.

⁹⁹ American Embassy Freetown, “Sierra Leone Army ‘Dream Team’ Airs Grievances,” February 4, 2009.

¹⁰⁰ Reports of the story vary in their statements of the size of the group. Some put it at six soldiers with others as high as fourteen. Umar Fofana, “Bring on the Alleged Mutineers,” *Politico*, January 28, 2014.

Reports have not stated precisely what it was that the soldiers were planning to protest over. In December of 2013 Sierra Leonean media ran a story about the soldiers accused of planning a mutiny and alleged that they have been incommunicado since their arrest. The story questions why no trial has been held and interviewed military sources and the Attorney General about the status of the case. In the article the soldiers' families appealed to the "international community, humanitarian organizations, civil society, and the media" to help advocate for a fair trial.¹⁰¹ Similar reports followed in the international media and human rights organizations also put out press releases detailing their concerns.¹⁰² Although it is too early to tell the fate of these soldiers, the general freedom of press in Sierra Leone has allowed for attention to be drawn to the case, which may have ultimately placed pressure on the government to handle the case more transparently. In April of 2014, nearly eight months after their arrest, the trial began for the alleged mutineers. The Sierra Leone government allowed media to attend the trial and local reporters live Tweeted details of the trial from the courtroom.¹⁰³ This is a sharp contrast from the secrecy of most mutiny trials and the first case I have seen of social media being used during a mutineer trial.

Ongoing soldier grievances were further made public in October of 2013 when a weekend radio show interviewed a soldier deployed on the AMISOM mission in Somalia. This individual accused the government of "fraudulently" reducing the peacekeepers pay and claimed that soldiers have to bribe officers to go on the mission. This individual's account was very similar to the stories I heard during field research, as described above. He alleged that Sierra Leonean soldiers are living "precariously" on deployment, without adequate supplies and food. He also added that the soldiers are upset that they receive their pay in Kenyan shillings when they were expecting U.S. dollars. While the Defence Minister responded that the claims were "unfounded" and "unprofessional" and questioned whether the caller was even a soldier, he still provided

¹⁰¹ Mohamed Massaquoi, "Africa Almost 14 Weeks Incommunicado," *Concord Times* (Freetown), December 6, 2013, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201312061592.html>.

¹⁰² Kemo Cham, "Sierra Leone Mutiny Trial Hit by Cash Crunch," *Africa Review*, February 11, 2014; Press Release by Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law (CARL), April 7, 2014.

¹⁰³ At the time of writing this the trial was still ongoing, it is expected to conclude in June or July of 2014.

a detailed response to each of the claims.¹⁰⁴ As the previous chapter explained, much of the grievances of peacekeepers appear to revolve around false expectations and uncertainty. It is therefore a positive step that the Ministry of Defence attempted to bring clarity to the complex issues of funding for peacekeeping operations. It is too early to tell if the peacekeepers will be satisfied with his response.

The growingly vocal grievances by soldiers is concerning, particularly as it threatens to create divisions within the newly restructured force. However in discussions with the soldiers it was also clear that they had faith in the government to address the issues and a level of confidence in the justice system. For example, one soldier explained that if they were to conduct a mutiny “you must explain why you do this thing, and people will listen. There are accessible leaders who want to know, who have an interest, who will listen. They (senior officers) will be arrested and they will be jailed.” This attitude is a significant change from the events in 1992 and 1997 when soldiers had little faith that the government would respond to their requests. In those years the government was the main target of military dissatisfaction, whereas with the soldiers interviewed above the government could provide the solution. This is a noteworthy shift as it indicates that the military views the government as responsive and having legitimate authority over the military.

Another rank and file soldier also expressed a sense of faith in the government, and justice system particularly by explaining

if you kick the government out you are not going to address the problems appropriately, you are talking to the international community. But if you arrest the (military) leadership they (the government) will look at the problem and bring some of them to justice.

He believes that the government is capable of handling the problem. He also suggests that when a coup occurs attention turns to international matters and the demands of the rank and file soldiers are ignored. These soldiers felt it was better to work within the

¹⁰⁴ For example, he explained that it is up to each country what they will pay their peacekeepers and Sierra Leone has decided on \$828 per month per soldier, with the balance of the UN pay going towards “operational costs.” He emphasized that it is not the responsibility of the Sierra Leone government or the Ministry of Defense to provide food for the peacekeepers and commented that he knew nothing about the allegations of bribery.

system through mutinying, rather than create a new one through a coup. This soldier confirms assessments made throughout this thesis that there are key differences between coups and mutinies. Soldiers see the two as different tactics to be used in different situations with different outcomes.

5.8 Conclusion

The grievances of the Tiger unit in 1992 are specific to their own situation but also consistent with the larger pattern of mutinies described throughout this thesis. Like most mutinies in the region, their primary complaints were over material conditions but these grievances were closely linked to perceptions of injustice. The injustice involved the discrepancy of their own situation compared to the conditions of the senior leadership in Freetown, which had its roots in a long pattern of benefits awarded by personal relationships rather than merit.

As is common with deployed units, the Tigers felt that they were entitled more from the hierarchy due to their hardship conditions and risks of the mission. The decision to revolt, as well as their success in doing so is likely partially due to increased group cohesion, which developed on deployment. Rank and file soldiers from the unit expressed loyalty to their unit commanders, which appeared to be based on their personal contact with them during the difficult combat situations. They demonstrated this loyalty as well as a level of discipline when they obeyed the order to attack State House, despite their expectations that the mission would be a protest. The case of the Tiger unit also demonstrates that internal revolts usually involve interplay of cohesion and division. The Tigers showed feelings of division from the larger hierarchy, based in Freetown. While they acted cohesively as a group, their divergent understandings of the mission showed that the cohesion was limited.

Interviews with members of the Tiger unit, as well as with current soldiers, demonstrate that they view mutinies and coups are distinct actions. However, the distinction between the two events was clearer in discussions than during the event.

This case shows the way the two actions can be intertwined. Even though the rank and file soldiers unanimously believed they were going to conduct a mutiny, they very quickly shifted their action to a coup.

Even though current Sierra Leonean soldiers acknowledge that life in the military is much better than in previous decades, there is growing dissatisfaction with aspects of their conditions. The main complaints concern accommodation, peacekeeping missions, and perceptions of corruption. Rank and file soldiers appear to be frustrated with the lack of action taken on their complaints by the military hierarchy and in recent years have attempted tactics to work around their chain of command. Through letters to the government, radio interviews, and even discussions with myself, they have attempted to bring wider attention to their cause. Soldiers have also considered mutinies as another way to communicate their message. The 2013 mutiny plan was likely linked to the perception that previous attempts to pressure change have not been successful.

Chapter Six- Mutinies with Unintended Consequences: Case Study of The Gambia

6.1 Introduction

On the exact same day as Sierra Leonean soldiers and civilians were dancing in the streets in celebration of Momoh's downfall through the coup by the Tiger unit, Gambians were also engaged in political statements, by voting in the country's 5th General Election. Despite these states being on opposite ends of the democratic spectrum in 1992, two years later both were under the control of a military council headed by a twenty-nine year old junior officer. Whereas Sierra Leone's history of past military involvement in politics and emerging civil war made a mutiny or coup unsurprising, military revolts in The Gambia were unprecedented until 1991. The Gambian military wasted no time in going from a seemingly well-disciplined and apolitical force to conducting two mutinies and a coup in a matter of three years.

This chapter will begin with a history of the Gambian military, which remains the youngest force in the region. Aspects of its unique development, often in collaboration with foreign military contingents, contributed to the complaints expressed by mutineers in 1991 and 1992. Both of the mutinies involved primary complaints over peacekeeping pay and the grievances are part of the trend of post-deployment mutinies described in Chapter Four. Like many mutinies, the ones in The Gambia in 1991 and 1992 also involved accusations of corruption, particularly against the officer corps. These complaints resonated with many in the military, beyond just those that had deployed together. While the government addressed the pay issue, they failed to deal with the issue of corruption, which had created divisions between the junior ranks (including junior officers) and the senior officers. Rather than tackle these internal tensions, the government invited a Nigerian military contingent to take over the top leadership aspects of the military, which furthered the military dissatisfaction and ultimately contributed to a coup in 1994. The leader of the 1994 coup, Yahya Jammeh,

is still in power today. Civil liberties and human rights under his rule have been neglected and the regime is considered authoritarian by most measures. The last part of the chapter will show how this ‘undemocratization’ in The Gambia in recent years may make the country less likely to experience mutinies.

6.2 The Reluctant Creation of the Gambian Armed Forces

By 1981 The Gambia remained one of only three West African states, which had not experienced a coup attempt (alongside Cape Verde and Côte d’Ivoire).¹ President Jawara had ruled The Gambia since its independence from Britain in 1965. Despite his long tenure, The Gambia had held a series of multi-party elections considered free and fair. Jawara’s Peoples Progressive Party (PPP) had always won a majority of seats but opposition parties were also represented in the parliament. More radical political organizations espousing varied combinations of Marxism, Socialism, and Pan-Africanist beliefs (such as the Movement for Justice in Africa-MOJA and Gambia Revolutionary Socialist Party-GRSP) were present in The Gambia but never considered a serious threat to the ruling party or existing democratic system.² There had been no cases of deaths by political violence, leading John Wiseman at the time to describe The Gambia as “a sometimes lonely, outpost of political tranquility in a troubled area.”³ Jawara had little reason to suspect his position was in danger when he travelled to Britain to attend the royal wedding of Prince Charles in 1981. It was while he was abroad on this trip that the country suffered its first coup attempt. While the occurrence of coups had become

¹ Patrick McGowan, “African Military coups d’etat, 1956-2001: Frequency, Trends and Distribution,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 41 3 (Sep. 2003): 363-364.

² Arnold Hughes, “The attempted Gambian coup d’etat of 30 July 1981” in *The Gambia: Studies in Society and Politics*, ed. Arnold Hughes, Birmingham University African Studies Series 3, 96-97.

³ John Wiseman, “Revolt in the Gambia: A pointless tragedy,” *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 71, no.284 (1981): 374; There was one incident in October of 1980 in which the Deputy Commander of the Field Force, Eku Mahoney, was killed by a junior member of the unit. Investigations were conducted to determine if the perpetrator, Mustapha Danso, was linked to radical political groups but no link was ever determined. Furthermore, there was no indication that the murder had anything to do with complaints within the Field Force, but rather was assessed to be an individual act of aggression. For more information on this topic see *The Voice of the People: The Story of the PPP, 1959-1989*, (Banjul: Baroueli Publications, 1992): 98; Dawda K. Jawara, *Kairaba* (West Sussex: Alhaji Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara, 2009): 315-317.

common on the continent by 1981, the Gambian coup attempt was unique for at least three reasons.

The first unique aspect of the coup attempt was that it was not carried out by the military. In fact the Gambia had no military at the time. Since independence from Britain in 1965, law and order in The Gambia was the responsibility of the police and the Field Force. The Field Force was formed out of the Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF), set up during colonialism by the British. At independence the Gambian regiment of the RWAFF was converted to a paramilitary force called the Field Force. The Field Force and police combined constituted less than 600 personnel and both performed policing duties.⁴

Kukoi Samba Sanyang, a civilian who had been unsuccessful in previous attempts to run for political office, led the coup attempt. Of the fifteen individuals initially involved in carrying out the attempt, only four were in the Field Force. The remaining individuals varied in their educational background and professions. However, a number were taxi drivers, giving the event the nickname “the taxi driver coup.”⁵

The other two unique factors of the 1981 coup attempt are the length of the event and the level of violence and death it caused. After breaking into the Field Force armoury, the rebel elements released all prisoners from Mile Two prison and distributed rifles and ammunition to anyone they felt was on their side.⁶ Instead of supporting the rebels, many who had acquired weapons carried out personal vendettas, further undermining the efforts of the rebels who already lacked widespread support.⁷ The coup plotters took other extreme measures that surely led to a loss of credibility such as holding Jawara’s wife and eight children hostage and threatening them live over the radio.⁸ Kukoi and his co-conspirators soon lost control of the situation and the plan to

⁴ Zaya Yeebo, *State of Fear in Paradise: The Military Coup in the Gambia and its Implications for Democracy*, (London: Africa Research and Information Bureau, 1995): 46; Abdoulaye Saine, *The Paradox of Third-Wave Democratization in Africa* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2009): 26.

⁵ Arnold Hughes and David Perfect, *A Political History of The Gambia: 1816-1994*, (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006): 212; Jimmy Kandeh, *Coups from Below: Armed Subalterns and State Power in West Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004): 180.

⁶ Hughes, “The attempted Gambian coup d’etat of 30 July 1981,” 99.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Hughes, “The attempted Gambian coup d’etat of 30 July 1981,” 103; Jawara, *Kairaba*, 311-312.

take Banjul was sidetracked by widespread looting, robbery, and killing.⁹ The majority of the Field Force was not quick to counter the rebels; instead they remained neutral and waited for the dust to clear before choosing a side.

Within the first day of the coup attempt Jawara requested the assistance of Senegal under a Defence Agreement that had been in place since 1965.¹⁰ Senegal responded quickly and generously, sending in hundreds if not thousands of soldiers including airborne and sea assault units.¹¹ The response was likely spurred by a fear of the movement spreading across the borders to Senegal. Within four days the coup was aborted but cost the lives of 33 Senegalese soldiers and 500 Gambians, many of whom were civilians uninvolved in the fighting. This coup attempt contrasts with general patterns that show that coups in Africa are usually short and cause little immediate loss of life.¹² The severity of the situation, especially in contrast to The Gambia's history of stability, can help explain the major changes enacted by the government following the attempt.

The exact reasoning behind the 1981 coup attempt remains contested but most accounts link it to the Marxist beliefs of Sanyang.¹³ For the purposes of this assessment, the causes of the coup attempt are less important than the effects. A direct effect of the coup attempt was the creation of the Gambian Armed Forces. Only a few months after the coup attempt, President Jawara and President Diouf of Senegal signed the Kaur Declaration leading to the creation of the Senegambia Confederation. This confederation aimed to integrate the security forces of Senegal and The Gambia as well as create an economic and monetary union and would serve to coordinate issues of

⁹ Hughes and Perfect, *A Political History of The Gambia*, 211-214; Hughes, "The attempted Gambian coup d'état of 30 July 1981," 99.

¹⁰ Nicodemus Fru Awasom, "The Senegambia in Historical and Contemporary Perspective," in *Nation-States and the Challenges of Regional Integration in West Africa: The Case of the Gambia*, ed. Siga Fatima Jagne (Paris: Editions Karthala, 2010): 52.

¹¹ Hughes and Perfect, *A Political History of The Gambia*, 215; Jawara, *Kairaba*, 311; The estimates of the number of Senegalese troops sent in the respond to the coup attempt vary widely. Jawara, in his autobiography, states that 300 airborne troops were initially dropped with more arriving later. Hughes gives an estimate as high as 3,000 total; British Special Air Service (SAS) were also utilized specifically to deal with the hostage situation.

¹² Patrick McGowan and Thomas H. Johnson, "African Military Coups d'Etat and Underdevelopment: A Quantitative Historical Analysis" *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 22 4 (Dec. 1984): 635; Harvey G. Kebschull "Operation "Just Missed": Lessons from Failed Coup Attempts," *Armed Forces and Society* 20, no. 4 (1994): 570.

¹³ Hughes and Perfect, *A Political History of The Gambia*, 210-220.

foreign policy.¹⁴ In order to integrate the two countries' armed forces, Gambia had to first create a military.

It is important to note that Jawara had been in power for 17 years before establishing a military. Prior to the coup attempt he believed an armed forces was not necessary for The Gambia. Although he appeared supportive of the Senegambia Confederation, he never seemed fully comfortable with the idea of the Gambian Armed Forces. Several interviewees felt that Jawara was pressured by Senegal to create a military because they did not want to take responsibility for Gambian security, as they had in 1981 (and which resulted in Senegalese casualties).¹⁵ In an interview with the official state newspaper Jawara acknowledges that he wanted to keep the military "as small as possible."¹⁶ Throughout his time in office he appeared reluctant to invest in the military and naïve to military matters. His actions following the mutinies in 1991 and 1992 and the coup of 1994, as presented later, back up this observation as do interviews with former soldiers and academics, many of whom noted Jawara's lack of interest in the military.

6.3 The Divisive Effects of the Confederal Army

The Gambian National Army (GNA) was created in 1983-84 by merging the existing loyal members of the Field Force with new recruits. The new unit was set up and trained by a small British training team. Around the same time, the Gambian National Gendarmerie (GNG), a force separate from the GNA, was established based on a French military model and trained by the Senegalese.¹⁷ Within five years of the coup attempt, Gambia went from having little more than a police force to an armed forces comprising an army and gendarmerie alongside the police.

There was a hybrid of British and French military structures used to create the Gambian Armed Forces, which led to confused roles and an often-contentious

¹⁴ Jawara, *Kairaba*, 341.

¹⁵ Author interview with military source C (former rank and file soldier), October 2012.

¹⁶ *The Gambia Times*, February 14, 1990.

¹⁷ Hughes and Perfect, *A Political History of The Gambia*, 220.

relationship between the army and gendarmerie. Officers from each branch attended different foreign training, which further intensified the divide between the GNA and GNG. Army officers, under the British styled system, trained in the United Kingdom, the United States, or occasionally Pakistan, while gendarmerie officers were sent for training in France, Morocco, Turkey or Senegal.¹⁸ Therefore the branches operated on different military doctrine, although all were part of the Gambian Armed Forces. This separateness intensified into a rivalry over the years and will be addressed later in its relation to the 1994 coup.¹⁹

The Senegambia Confederal Agreement merged elements of the new Gambian Armed Forces with the Senegalese Armed Forces to create the Confederal Army. The Confederal Army was made up of two-thirds Senegalese soldiers and one-third Gambian soldiers with the ability to deploy anywhere within the confederation.²⁰ Gambian soldiers chosen for the Confederal Army were given the same pay grade as the Senegalese soldiers. Due to the higher cost of living in Senegal than Gambia, the amount was significantly more than the normal pay rate for the Gambian military. This “financial advantage made it the dream assignment of every Gambian soldier.”²¹ However, it caused disparities in pay within the new Gambian army and soldiers “complained of gross differences in income and privileges” as a result of the Confederal Army.²² Furthermore, it was a pay scale that the Gambian military could not sustain after the Senegambia Confederation disbanded.

One former Confederal Army member explained that there was a level of prestige involved with being in the unit. The Senegalese military at the time had a longer history and higher standards for recruitment and Gambian soldiers selected for the Confederal Army were supposed to match the standard.²³ However, former soldiers noted that in reality the way to get chosen for the Confederal Army was to know one of

¹⁸ Samsudeen Sarr, *Coup d'etat by the Gambia National Army* (Xlibris: 2007): 120.

¹⁹ Binneh Minteh, *Rethinking the Military and Democratization* (Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Publishing, 2010): 7.

²⁰ It took time for The Gambia to recruit and train its army and therefore The Gambia did not begin contributing troops to the joint unit until 1985 even though the Confederal Army was established years earlier.

²¹ Ebrima Chongan, *The Price of Duty* (Lulu: 2010): 26.

²² Yeebo, *State of Fear in Paradise*, 47.

²³ Author interview with military source C (former enlisted soldier), October 2012.

the Gambian selecting officers. In an interview with a former Confederal Army soldier he laughingly said, "if it was not for corruption, I would not have been in the [Confederal] army." He explained that he did not meet the standard criteria but he knew someone that assigned him a spot.²⁴ This favouritism, which began from the very start of the Gambian Armed Force's existence, likely undermined the integrity of the officer corps who were viewed by their subordinates as corrupted. Furthermore it weakened the hierarchical structures by providing privileges based on personal links rather than on rank or merit.

Even when the Gambian soldiers joined the Senegambia Confederation, they were junior to their Senegalese colleagues due to their newly appointed ranks. Due to the vastly different size of the Gambian and Senegalese populations, Senegal also contributed more resources and troops.²⁵ Therefore, the Gambian military was always second fiddle in the defence aspects of the Senegambia Confederation. Furthermore, the key tasks of guarding the airport, port, and Gambian president were given to Senegalese troops.²⁶ Gambian soldiers said that at the time they saw potential personal benefits to the Confederal Army, but some also saw it as an insult to their national pride to not have full responsibility of protecting the nation.²⁷ Political opposition parties claimed the confederation was a threat to national sovereignty and economically disadvantageous to the Gambian citizens.²⁸

Individuals with doubt about the agreement did not have to wait long for the Condeferation to come to an end, which is did suddenly in 1989, over a dispute regarding the rotation of the Confederal presidency.²⁹ In August of 1989 Senegal removed all 300 troops from the Gambia without prior warning.³⁰ President Jawara explained that he only found out about the withdrawal of troops when he arrived at work

²⁴ Author confidential interview, 2012.

²⁵ John Wiseman and Elizabeth Vidler, "The July 1994 Coup d'état in The Gambia: The End of an Era?" *Round Table* 333, no. 1 (Jan 1995): 55.

²⁶ Wiseman and Vidler, "The July 1994 Coup d'état in The Gambia: The End of an Era?" 55.

²⁷ Author interview with military source C (former enlisted soldier), October 2012.

²⁸ Hughes and Perfect, *A Political History of The Gambia*, 265.

²⁹ Awasom, "The Senegambia in Historical and Contemporary Perspective," 55.

³⁰ Awasom, "The Senegambia in Historical and Contemporary Perspective," 55; Wiseman and Vidler, "The July 1994 Coup d'état in The Gambia: The End of an Era?" 55.

and found that there were no Presidential Guards present.³¹ The Senegalese Minister of Defence justified the withdrawal by reasoning that the Senegalese soldiers were needed to deal with an emerging issue on the border with Mauritania.³² Gambia responded by initiating the legal measures to dissolve the confederation.³³ Thus the Senegambia Confederation ended less than seven years after it was formed.

Most of the grand plans for the confederation were never enacted (in particular the monetary union) and therefore its demise did not have major repercussions in terms of the political or economic stability of The Gambia. However, the withdrawal of the Senegalese troops meant Jawara was finally dependent on his armed forces for both internal and external protection. This was the first time since the army's creation that it had not been alongside foreign leadership.

Gambia's involvement in the Confederal Army, especially in the early stages of the military's existence may have sowed the initial seeds of discontent within the military. It created divisions within the armed forces by giving some soldiers more pay and prestige. One former soldier explained, "We were seeing that some of us are treated better than others and that is very dangerous in the army."³⁴ Additionally, junior soldiers alleged corrupt practices within the officer corps during the selection of Confederal Army members. Unfortunately, these accusations did not end with the termination of the Senegambia confederation.

6.4 Dissatisfaction Amongst the Peacekeepers

At the same time that the Senegambia Confederation was winding down, the rebel situation in Liberia was intensifying. As Chapter Four described, ECOWAS, of which Gambia is a member, decided to send a peacekeeping force to Liberia, under the title ECOMOG. In August of 1990, 105 Gambian soldiers were deployed to Monrovia,

³¹ Jawara, *Kairaba*, 354.

³² Wiseman and Vidler, "The July 1994 Coup d'état in The Gambia: The End of an Era?" 55.

³³ Hughes and Perfect, *A Political History of The Gambia*, 265.

³⁴ Author interview with military source C (former enlisted soldier), October 2012.

alongside Ghanaian, Nigerian, Guinean, and Sierra Leonean troops.³⁵ This was the Gambian military's first involvement in a peacekeeping mission. The ECOMOG deployment was a controversial issue within The Gambia. Newspapers questioned the goal of the mission and some military members expressed doubt as to whether the military was adequately prepared.³⁶ However, similar to earning a spot in the Confederal Army, soldiers viewed an appointment to the ECOMOG mission as a potential way to earn money since peacekeepers were paid a higher deployment salary. One former soldier explained that those that had not had an opportunity to be a part of the Confederal army were compensated with appointments on the ECOMOG mission.³⁷ This is similar to the trend identified in Chapter Four, in which military hierarchies often treat peacekeeping deployments as a reward or compensation, which creates false expectations of the mission. Although involvement in both the Confederal army and ECOMOG resulted in additional pay, the ECOMOG mission involved direct combat and related hardships, whereas the Confederal army did not. Those expecting easy additional pay from the ECOMOG mission were quickly disappointed.

The Gambian soldiers were involved in the first rounds of deployments on the ECOMOG Liberia mission and thus the soldiers would have experienced the problems described in Chapter Four, which were particularly severe at the beginning of the mission. The Liberia mission was difficult and dangerous for even the experienced militaries in the region and the Gambian military was further disadvantaged by its infancy. A former Commander of the GNA explained that the Gambian peacekeeping unit was inexperienced and underprepared. He states at the time of the deployment the army had

never trained on its own, let alone participated in real armed conflict with its officers in charge. The British...did everything for us...So when C

³⁵ *The Gambia Weekly*, August 10, 1990; The exact number of Gambian troops involved in the first ECOMOG mission vary depending on the source, although all cite that over 100 troops were deployed. *The Gambia Weekly* (government sponsored newspaper) and Jawara's Autobiography quote 105 troops, where as other media sources and academic writing puts the number at 150.

³⁶ *Foroyaa* published numerous and regular criticism of the mission from 1989 into the early 1990s; Author interview with military source D (former officer) September 2012.

³⁷ Author interview with military source C (former enlisted soldier), October 2012.

Company of 150 men including six of the best GNA officers were sent to Liberia, the timid command immediately collapsed...³⁸

A former Gambian officer explained in an interview that the unit stood no chance against rebels who were trained and motivated to fight.³⁹ Funmi Olonisakin also notes the inexperience of the Gambians during her research of the ECOMOG mission by commenting that their most senior officer was a Captain, whereas the other contingents all had much more experienced officers present.⁴⁰

During the initial deployment two Gambian soldiers, Corporal Modou Bojang and Private Sama Jawo, were killed.⁴¹ As this was the first combat mission that the Gambian Armed Forces had been involved in, these casualties were also the first for the country's military. The deaths likely had an effect on the unit; however their direct relation to the 1991 and 1992 mutinies is a point of contention within the narrative of the mutinies. In 1995, five years after the death of these two soldiers and after the Jawara regime was ousted, President Jammeh approved a mission to retrieve the bodies of these Gambian soldiers in Liberia.⁴² When the bodies were exhumed they held a ceremony and burial for the soldiers in Banjul. The government claimed that The Gambia was the only country to leave their dead in Liberia and argued that this was a key cause of the previous mutinies. Lt. Col. (ret.) Sarr explained that the return of the fallen soldiers was meant to bring closure to the tragic event experienced by the ECOMOG soldiers.⁴³

However, this appears to be a rewriting of history. There is no mention of soldiers being angry about the bodies of their colleagues in the press at the time and all interviewees were adamant that this had nothing to do with the mutinies. One former soldier explained that bringing home the bodies in 1995 was a "psychological game to make the former regime look bad."⁴⁴ Another stated, "[Jammeh] was in the army, he knows how to play with the emotions of the soldiers."⁴⁵ Other soldiers said that military

³⁸ Sarr, *Coup d'etat by the Gambia National Army*, 126-127.

³⁹ Author interview with military source D (former officer) September 2012.

⁴⁰ Olonisakin, *Reinventing Peacekeeping in Africa*, 166.

⁴¹ Sarr, *Coup d'etat by the Gambia National Army*, 40.

⁴² Ibid., 147.

⁴³ Ibid., 147.

⁴⁴ Author interview with military source D (former officer) September 2012.

⁴⁵ Author interview with military source C (former enlisted soldier), October 2012.

members are aware that if they are killed on the battlefield their bodies will be left there. They explained that this is not a practice unique to Gambia but that great militaries throughout history have done the same during war.⁴⁶ Rather than rectify an unresolved problem, the military junta attempted to utilize the mutinies from past years to remind the soldiers of their dissatisfaction during the Jawara regimes and make a public show of how they would treat the military with more respect. However, as the interviewees' statements demonstrate, many soldiers saw through this instrumentalization of the mutinies for political gains.

The first Gambian ECOMOG contingent returned home on April 13, 1991. The soldiers were honoured with a ceremony and another contingent of a similar size was sent to Liberia to replace the returned soldiers. Media coverage of the ceremony noted "it was clear that Liberia was not a dinner party for them. Those known by our reporters had lost a lot of weight."⁴⁷ Former soldiers noted the same, one remarked that the returned soldiers looked like "typical pictures of people from the third world", meaning they looked malnourished.⁴⁸ Less than a month after their return, media in The Gambia started to report on pay issues within the unit. Newspapers reported that soldiers were only paid part of their allowances for the later months they were deployed and received no compensation for the last month they were on the mission. The newspaper *Foroyaa* also questioned why soldiers must come to the media to have their complaints reach official channels. They suggested the government or military should have mechanism in place to communicate with the soldiers over these issues.⁴⁹ These soldiers were at the forefront of the trend, described in Chapters Two and Three, of soldiers taking their complaints to the media. Whereas many countries in the region were struggling to gain media freedoms in the early 1990s, The Gambia already had these rights, and soldiers utilized them. Additionally, the media appeared to take the side of the soldiers. Thus the mutineers benefitted from media freedoms both by having an outlet to communicate their frustrations and from the support expressed by the civilian media.

⁴⁶ Author interview with military source A (current officer) and military source B (current rank and file) May 2012.

⁴⁷ *Foroyaa*, May 15, 1991.

⁴⁸ Author interview with military source C (former enlisted soldier), October 2012.

⁴⁹ *Foroyaa*, May 15, 1991.

The military leadership and government did not pay heed to the grievances expressed by soldiers in the media. A month after the press identified the pay issue, the soldiers had still not received their pay and the complaints escalated to a mutiny. On June 13th, two months after their return, the ECOMOG soldiers gathered in Yundum barracks to request a meeting with the Commander of the Armed Forces, Colonel Ndw Njie.⁵⁰ Njie reportedly refused to meet the soldiers due to security concerns.⁵¹ The next day a small contingent of officers and NCOs, led by the British military advisor, Lt. Col. Jim Shaw, attempted to arrest the soldiers at Yundum barracks for organizing a mutiny but they were unsuccessful.⁵² The ECOMOG soldiers took to the streets, arriving at State House in Banjul to express their dissatisfaction. There were approximately 60 soldiers involved in the mutiny, all Sergeants or below.⁵³ President Jawara agreed to meet with the soldiers about their complaints.⁵⁴

The mutineers did not use any force or violence; still many at the time described their shock at the junior soldiers' bold behaviour. An individual who worked for the Jawara government at the time states,

I remember seeing soldiers marching to State House, we watched from our windows in Banjul. It was the first time in my life that I had seen soldiers in uniform demonstrating. It was the first time I knew something was seriously wrong, it was the first writing on the wall.⁵⁵

The government did take the mutineers seriously, and made significant changes, although not necessarily ones designed to address the root causes of the mutiny. The mutineers were first and foremost asking for their back pay from the peacekeeping mission.⁵⁶ The soldiers also made requests for improvements in accommodations, equipment, and welfare.⁵⁷ However, as Dr. Abdoulaye Saine speculates "the motivation to mutiny ran deeper than just pay, there was widespread disapproval with the regime, in

⁵⁰ Sarr, *Coup d'etat by the Gambia National Army*, 127-128; *Foroyaa*, June 30, 1991.

⁵¹ *Foroyaa*, June 30, 1991.

⁵² Author interview with military source A (current officer), May 2012; Sarr, *Coup d'etat by the Gambia National Army*, p127-128.

⁵³ *West Africa*, February 10, 1992; Author interview with military source D (former officer), September 2012.

⁵⁴ *West Africa*, October 10-16, 1994.

⁵⁵ Author confidential interview, May 2012.

⁵⁶ Author interview with military source F (former officer), August 2012.

⁵⁷ *West Africa*, October 10-16, 1994.

part due to increased corruption.”⁵⁸ Saine’s speculation is consistent with interviews with former soldiers, all of whom claimed that corruption was behind the non-payment. Soldiers did not believe the government’s claim that they did not have the money, but rather thought that “the senior officers were robbing them.” One former soldier explained “the top brass got the [deployment] money and sliced it, only gave some to the soldiers.” He further elaborated that the soldiers spoke to Nigerian soldiers while on the ECOMOG mission and found out that they were getting paid more than the Gambians.⁵⁹ The soldiers believed that the discrepancy between the Gambian pay and Nigerian pay proved that senior Gambian officers were taking part of their salary. He added “ECOMOG was not a Gambian contingent alone, it was ECOWAS...how can a sub regional force that is supposed to be recognized as an international organization not have money to be paid?” While Chapter Four explained that there were funding issues at the organization level, this quote supports the idea that soldiers are often unsympathetic towards these high level funding issues and instead interpret the cause as corruption (which it may have been). One soldier explained that the perceived corruption demoralized the troops. He states “a military should be proud, but there was too much corruption, too much nepotism.”⁶⁰

President Jawara promised to pay the mutineers’ owed allowances and look into the other requests.⁶¹ However, one former soldier says that paying the soldiers only justified the corruption accusations in the eyes of many in the military. He explained “if there was no money really, even if [the mutineers] were able to bring the sky down [the government] would not be able to get money but as soon as that happened they were paid the money. So where did that money come from?”⁶² People believed that the immediate payment showed the salary dues had been available the whole time and officers were simply not distributing it to the soldiers. Thus paying the soldiers so quickly only furthered junior soldiers’ allegations of top-level corruption and incompetence. It appears the government was aware of the resentment building within

⁵⁸ Author interview with Dr. Abdoulaye Saine, June, 2012.

⁵⁹ Author interview with military source C (former enlisted soldier), October 2012.

⁶⁰ Author interview with military source D (former officer), September 2012.

⁶¹ *West Africa*, October 10-16, 1994.

⁶² Author interview with military source C (former enlisted soldier), October 2012.

the ranks because one month after the mutiny the Minister of Finance announced a pay increase for all the Armed Forces. The news outlet reporting the story expressed hope that the move “may temper down the feelings that are running high.”⁶³ However, as will be presented below, tempers continued to rise and dissatisfaction soon spread to the junior officers.

Initially the soldiers that mutinied were asked to go on leave but a later press release stated that they were suspended on half pay until a full enquiry could be conducted.⁶⁴ It remains unclear if or how the mutineers were punished; however it seems likely that the mutineers were not dismissed from the military. The media had been covering the story of the mutiny and never mentioned a mass dismissal of soldiers. Had there been a large number of soldiers fired or detained, it would have been fairly big news in a country as small as The Gambia and the media would likely have reported the story. Furthermore, years after the event Lt. Col. Shaw (the British advisor who had pushed for the mutineers to be arrested) commented that he believed the 1994 coup stemmed from the fact that the government “failed to take effective actions against the ‘dissenters’ from ECOMOG.”⁶⁵ This indicates that the mutineers were either not punished or only mildly punished.

Whereas the fate of the mutineers was vague, the same cannot be said about the Commanding Officer (CO) of the Gambian National Army, Colonel Njie. He was retired over the event and there remains speculation over whether he chose to retire or was fired. Regardless of whose decision it was, it was likely intended to show that the government and military took the mutiny seriously. Colonel Njie was not only the CO of the Gambian National Army but he was the only CO that the GNA had ever had, assuming the position when the force first came into existence. However, Njie did not appear to suffer much from his ‘punishment’ as he was immediately given an ambassadorial position abroad.

⁶³ *The Nation*, July 20, 1991.

⁶⁴ *West Africa*, July 8-14, 1991.

⁶⁵ Comment by LtCol Rtd Jim Shaw on blog titled “Mutiny in Gambia, Former Army Lieutenant Kejaw Touray Breaks his Silence,” August 28, 2007.

6.5 Mutinies Lead to a Contentious Caretaker

Less than a month after news of Njie's departure, the government announced that the Nigerian Army Training Assistance Group (NATAG) would soon be arriving in The Gambia to help train and equip the army. The especially unusual aspect of the NATAG arrangement was that the top Nigerian officer, Colonel (later promoted to Brigadier General) Abubakar Dada was appointed Commanding Officer of the Gambian National Army.

Soldiers at the time remember being "shocked" by the decision.⁶⁶ Media reporting had a similar reaction, stating that the news of the NATAG "came as a thunderbolt from the blue."⁶⁷ The decision to bring in another foreign contingent was a controversial one from the start and the idea of having the national military headed by a foreign officer was especially contentious. One local paper published commentary stating, "One can understand having foreign military advisors or trainers. Having a foreign military commander for a sovereign republic appears strange." The story then went on to list every individual in the Gambian military from the rank of Captain and above, pointed out their long and decorated service and then posed the question "Is the government telling us that none of these people are competent enough to head the army?"⁶⁸ The departure of Colonel Njie was due to the fact that he had lost the confidence of his men. However, Jawara did little to restore this confidence in Gambian military leadership. By appointing Nigerian leaders he was essentially confirming the rank and file statement that they could not trust their Gambian officers.

Although the government announced the NATAG plan almost immediately after the mutiny in June of 1991, it took about nine months for the seventy-nine member contingent to arrive.⁶⁹ In the meantime The Gambia endured its second mutiny. The second contingent from the ECOMOG mission returned from their deployment in December 1991. On February 3, 1992 thirty-five soldiers from the unit left Yundum

⁶⁶ Author interview with military source C (former enlisted soldier), September 2012.

⁶⁷ *Foroyaa*, July 15, 1991.

⁶⁸ *Foroyaa*, July 15, 1991.

⁶⁹ *The Point*, March 23, 1992.

barracks in a military vehicle around 9:00 am.⁷⁰ At least one account of the event claimed the soldiers were armed after stealing weapons from the armoury and fired shots into the air.⁷¹ However this detail is questionable as the published accounts of the court martial do not show any charges of stealing or unlawfully discharging weapons.

The mutineers soon disembarked from the military vehicle, took over a bus and ordered the driver to go towards Banjul (a distance of roughly thirty km). This bus high jacking by uniformed soldiers was apparently witnessed by many people during rush hour and the news quickly spread and rumours grew. *The Point* newspaper reported "before the truth emerged, there was chaos especially in the Serrekunda area where people stampeded to collect their kids from school and their wares from the market."⁷² Other media outlets report similar reactions of the streets clearing out and shopkeepers locking up out of fear.⁷³ In reality, the event turned out to be much less dramatic than the local population anticipated. The police and gendarmerie intercepted the soldiers at Denton Bridge, which connects Banjul to the mainland.⁷⁴ Therefore, this group of mutineers never made it to State House. The thirty-five mutineers were arrested and court martialled.

The soldiers were making their way to Banjul in order to express their grievances over unpaid allowances from their ECOMOG deployment. A Gambian newspaper covering the story commented that

If the people mistake the soldiers demonstration for what it is not, it must be because nobody would have thought that they would be given a chance, through non-payment of allowances, for them to make a repeat performance of last year's march on the Presidency.⁷⁵

In other words, why did the government not learn from the mutiny of the first ECOMOG contingent?

The actual amount of money that the soldiers were owed was relatively small. According to news reporting they were owed a balance of 15 days of pay, totalling \$45

⁷⁰ Foroyaa, February 15, 1992

⁷¹ Sarr, *Coup d'etat by the Gambia National Army*, 129.

⁷² *The Point*, February 10, 1992.

⁷³ Foroyaa, February 15, 1992.

⁷⁴ *West Africa*, February 10, 1992.

⁷⁵ *The Point*, February 10, 1992.

each.⁷⁶ Interviewed soldiers explained that like the previous mutiny, the material grievances were linked to perceived corruption amongst the officers. The soldiers felt that they had gone on a dangerous mission, only to come back and have someone in their chain of command take their hard earned money. One soldier explained “Let’s say you are from the warfront, there is stress, you are making sacrifices of your life, this issue makes you very aggravated.”⁷⁷ Another former soldier explained that it was not just the ECOMOG soldiers that were upset about the non-payment; other soldiers and civilian alike thought it was disrespectful to refuse payment to soldiers who had undergone combat in the name of the country.⁷⁸ A former soldier stated “soldiers on the ground must be paid better, they were facing war every day. They should be paid more. Why would anyone go risk their life for that?” Another military interviewee explained that “they were in real war situations, so for them to not get paid was a real problem.”⁷⁹ These military interviewees all highlight the risks involved for the ECOMOG soldiers and show that there is a shift in the what is deemed acceptable treatment based on deployment experience.

The trial for the mutineers began on February 25th. Whereas the case for the 1991 mutineers was handled as an internal military affair, the 1992 mutineers were tried publicly. Local media covered the court martial and the judicial hall was reportedly packed to full capacity on the day of the trial. The soldiers were charged with eleven accounts including breaking out of barracks, conduct contrary to good order, insubordination, and wilfully obstructing police officers. The court martial (made up of three officers) deliberated for 2 days and found most soldiers guilty of at least some of the eleven accounts. The sentences varied from dismissals to fines.⁸⁰

The third contingent of Gambian ECOMOG soldiers arrived home in July 1992 and by this time the NATAG was in The Gambia. The ECOMOG soldiers were paid their outstanding allowances immediately. At their reception ceremony the new Commanding Officer of the GNA (Nigerian) Colonel Dada warned the troops that he

⁷⁶ *The Point*, February 10, 1992.

⁷⁷ Interview with military source A (current officer), May 2012.

⁷⁸ Author interview with military source C (former enlisted soldier), September, 2012.

⁷⁹ Author interview with military source F (former officer), August 2012.

⁸⁰ *Foroyaa*, March 15, 1992; *The Point*, April 27, 1992.

would not tolerate any acts of indiscipline within their unit and expanded on the issue of loyalty within the armed forces. This speech apparently offended some people though. An article in *The Point* calls the speech “rude” and “unfitting” arguing that the returned soldiers should be treated as decorated veterans rather than with suspicion. It further criticized the implication in Dada’s speech that the mutinying soldiers were disloyal, stating that the soldiers should not be faulted for demanding what was promised to them. Lastly, the article condemned the government for “expelling those experienced men from the army and having Nigerian troops in the country.”⁸¹ The “experienced men” is presumably referring to the ECOMOG soldiers who were dismissed following the 1992 mutiny. This is another example where the media clearly took the side of the mutineers.

There were no further mutinies after the NATAG arrived. Therefore, it could be assumed that the issues protested during the mutinies were fixed by replacing Gambian senior leadership with Nigerian officers. In fact, some media at the time congratulated the “new military management team” on rectifying the problem.⁸² However, replacing the top leadership did little to address the underlying problems in the military, in particular the problem of corruption and lack of trust in the leadership.

6.6 The Unresolved Problems Grow

The mutineers did something that was unprecedented at the time in The Gambia; they publicly exposed the internal problems of the military. The complaints about deployment payments was specific to the ECOMOG soldiers but their accusations of corruption and mismanagement resonated with others in the military, particularly junior officers. Former soldiers explained that these were issues that the military had been grumbling about amongst themselves for a while. Former soldiers explain that corruption had been apparent since the force’s creation and was by 1992 a “cancer that had taken root and spread.”⁸³ Promotions were seen to be based on favouritism, which

⁸¹ *The Point*, July 27, 1992.

⁸² *The Point*, July 20, 1992.

⁸³ Author interview with military source C (former enlisted soldier), October 2012.

further eroded the soldiers' confidence in the hierarchy.⁸⁴ One former soldier states that the senior officers "did not have control and we did not respect them."⁸⁵ Lt. Col. (ret.) Sarr provides accounts of senior officers selling items confiscated from illegal fishing operations and bribing senior government officials.⁸⁶ Similarly, senior officers were accused of selling food meant for soldiers for personal profit.⁸⁷ Soldiers believed that senior military officers did not fear that their actions would be punished because they were closely aligned with politicians.⁸⁸

In addition to these general complaints were more specific grievances related to the NATAG presence. Sarr explains "the final straw was when the government reduced us to nonentities and brought in Nigerians to command and control us."⁸⁹ Although enlisted soldiers conducted the mutinies, the government response to bring in the NATAG, most affected the officers. Gambian officers complained about the better accommodations, cars, and pay the Nigerians received as well as other fringe benefits such as free fuel.⁹⁰ The Gambians were not just envious of the Nigerians' material benefits; they felt that their presence was directly detrimental to their own careers. The Nigerians held all of the highest positions, with no Gambians above the rank of a Major.⁹¹ Therefore, the officers in particular felt that the Nigerians thwarted their potential for advancement.

It appears that the junior officers were most offended by the Nigerian presence. The junior officers also began to look down on the Gambian senior officers, believing they were either complacent or complicit in the system that they felt disadvantaged them. An individual who was a junior officer at the time, said he and his cohort felt the senior Gambian officers were "useless" and there were serious internal tensions within the officer corps. He explained that because the junior officers worked most closely

⁸⁴ Author interview with military source D (former officer), September 2012.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Sarr, *Coup d'etat by the Gambia National Army*, 55.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 32.

⁸⁸ Author interview with military source C (former enlisted soldier), October 2012.

⁸⁹ Sarr, *Coup d'etat by the Gambia National Army*, 33.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 50.

⁹¹ Author interview with military source D (former officer), September 2012; Sarr, *Coup d'etat by the Gambia National Army*, 19.

with the rank and file soldiers, their negative opinions of the senior officers spread to the enlisted ranks.⁹²

The senior Gambian officers may not have been as concerned or vocal about the Nigerians because they were closer to retirement and perhaps not as worried about moving up the ladder. A Gambian academic and former member of the Jawara regime has another hypothesis. He believes that the difference in reaction by the junior officers and senior officers in The Gambia represents a generational divide within the military. The junior officers at the time grew up in the 1960s-1970s and were thus more exposed to radical politics than their predecessors. He argues that they were more politically conscious and less willing to stand by what they saw as major injustices within the force.⁹³ Abdoulaye Saine and Ebrima Ceesay have a similar assessment, stating that the divide was not necessarily one of exposure to radical politics but of having been more educated than their seniors who grew up in pre-independence years.⁹⁴

The strongly negative reaction that soldiers felt towards the Nigerian presence under NATAG contrasts with the generally more accepting attitude towards the Senegalese presence under the Condeferal Army agreement. By the arrival of NATAG the Gambian military no longer saw itself as inexperienced, especially after numerous iterations on foreign peacekeeping missions, and therefore less accepting of working alongside foreign troops within Gambian borders. A large part of the difference was cultural as several former Gambian soldiers explained that the Senegalese and Gambians share many similarities in terms of indigenous languages, religion, history, and culture. One soldier furthered the point by stating that every Gambian has a relative that is Senegalese and the Senegalese soldiers were seen as family.⁹⁵ This family metaphor did not seem to extend to Nigerians who were viewed more as foreigners. Lastly, under the Confederal Army Senegalese and Gambian soldiers received the same pay and privileges. This was not the case with the NATAG. These complaints over foreign leadership are similar to mutinies seen in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zaire in the

⁹² Author interview with military source F (former officer), August 2012.

⁹³ Author confidential interview, May 2012.

⁹⁴ Abdoulaye Saine and Ebrima Ceesay, "Post-Coup Politics and Authoritarianism in The Gambia: 1994-2012," in *State and Society in The Gambia Since Independence: 1965-2012*, eds. Abdoulaye Saine, Ebrima Ceesay, and Ebrima Sall, Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2013, 156.

⁹⁵ Author interview with military source D (former officer), September 2012.

early 1960s. In these incidents the foreigners were former colonial officers but there are similar patterns of soldiers feeling offended by privileges and responsibilities being given to outsiders over the national armed forces.

One other important aspect of discontent among many Gambian military personnel at the time was the disbanding of the Gambian National Gendarmerie. While the gendarmerie and army trained separately they were relatively equally funded and served as a counter weight to each other.⁹⁶ For example, it was the gendarmerie who countered the 1991 and 1992 mutinies amongst army members. However, in 1992 the government decided to disband the gendarmerie and merge the members into a unit within the police force called the Tactical Support Group (TSG).⁹⁷ For those personnel who were in the gendarmerie, this was an unpopular decision because the police received less funding and equipment than the army and was generally seen as less prestigious.⁹⁸ Soldiers blamed the decision to disband the gendarmerie on the Nigerians, who were advising the Gambian government on military matters at the time.⁹⁹ Furthermore, Gambian soldiers have retrospectively blamed the Nigerians for over-arming the Gambian National Army, introducing mortars, rocket propelled grenades, anti-aircraft guns, heavy machine guns, grenades, and rocket launchers whereas the force had previously made do with smaller rifles and handguns.¹⁰⁰ Numerous former soldiers argue that disbanding the gendarmerie caused the 1994 coup to be a “fait accompli” because there was no counterweight against the army.¹⁰¹ The unequal strength of the army compared to the police can be seen in the showdown between the two forces on the day of the 1994 coup as will be described below.

While tensions were rising within the military, the civilian population was similarly expressing frustrations. In the early 1990s media grew increasingly critical of Jawara and the PPP, who by that point had been in power for nearly thirty years.

⁹⁶ Sarr, *Coup d'état by the Gambia National Army*, 47; Chongan, *The Price of Duty*, 31.

⁹⁷ *The Gambia Weekly*, February 28, 1992.

⁹⁸ When the gendarmerie was converted into the TSG, many gendarmes requested a transfer to the army. One such individual was Lieutenant Yahya Jammeh.

⁹⁹ Chongan, *The Price of Duty*, 32.

¹⁰⁰ Sarr, *Coup d'état by the Gambia National Army*, 47; Author interview with military source D (former officer), September 2012.

¹⁰¹ Author interview with military source F (former officer), August 2012; Chongan, *The Price of Duty*, 32; Author interview with military source C (former enlisted soldier), October 2012.

Newspapers ran numerous stories accusing the government of inaction. For example, frequent news articles were published questioning why The Gambia still had no university.¹⁰² Other articles called the PPP “mere tax collectors” and showed pictures of garbage piling up and accused the government of failing on basic functions.¹⁰³ The criticism did not just come from the media; citizens of various sectors of society began to take to the streets to express their grievances. Market vendors took their complaints about government eviction notices to State House, taxi drivers held strikes for better facilities, women in Bakau blockaded the street for the President’s motorcade over water issues, and high school students protested over exam changes.¹⁰⁴ Ongoing demonstrations in Brikama over the privatization of water taps grew increasingly large in the spring and summer of 1994, culminating in a march with an estimated 4,000 citizens, which turned violent when protestors clashed with police forces (a rarity in The Gambia).¹⁰⁵

Furthermore, corruption became a leading story in media in the early 1990s, with several high-level political corruption scandals uncovered.¹⁰⁶ One government interviewee explains that in the early 1990s “the whole atmosphere had changed, everyone started talking about change, even myself, we weren’t sure what type of change we just wanted a change.” He noted that at the time the military and civilian populations had a close relationship and speculated that “the military must have been aware of the grumblings of the civilians.”¹⁰⁷

6.7 The Third and Final Strike

The mutinies in 1991 and 1992 had given Jawara two warnings of the problems within the military but more drastic measures were taken on the third revolt, which

¹⁰² A sample of such articles include *Daily Observer*, May 30, 1994; *Daily Observer*, June 21, 1994; *The Point*, February 17, 1994.

¹⁰³ *Daily Observer*, July 1-3, 1994; *Daily Observer*, July 14, 1994.

¹⁰⁴ *Foroyaa*, March 15, 1993; *Foroyaa*, April 28, 1993; *Foroyaa*, May 15, 1993; *Foroyaa*, May 30, 1994.

¹⁰⁵ *Daily Observer*, April 7, 1994; *Foroyaa*, July 15, 1994.

¹⁰⁶ Wiseman and Vidler, “The July 1994 Coup d’etat in The Gambia: The End of an Era?” 58; Kandeh, *Coups from Below: Armed Subalterns and State Power in West Africa*, 183.

¹⁰⁷ Author confidential interview, May 2012.

occurred on July 22nd 1994. Almost twenty years after the incident, there is still major disagreement on whether this event was intended to be a mutiny or a coup. Even soldiers involved in the events give varying assessments as to the original intention. There are several published accounts of exactly what happened at a tactical level on the 22nd of July.¹⁰⁸ This assessment will only provide a summarized account, not necessarily to make a judgment about the original intent of the actions, but rather to show how the previous two mutinies were precursors to this event.

In the months leading up to July 1994, it appears coups were on many people's minds. Interviewed former soldiers as well as President Jawara admit that there were numerous rumours about a pending coup. The local media had extensive reporting on neighbouring coups, in particular the 1992 coup in Sierra Leone and even ran a story just weeks before the Gambia coup titled "How Safe Are Our Leaders?"¹⁰⁹ However, few people would have guessed this particular timing for a revolt because there was a bilateral exercise with the U.S. Navy scheduled to take place in and around Banjul. Announcements were made in the newspapers and radio to alert citizens to the exercise and warned people not to be alarmed by the increase in uniformed soldiers in the streets.¹¹⁰ Conducting the coup at the same time as a planned exercise, with American and Nigerian troops present, led some soldiers who were there on the day to claim it was a brilliant plan while others believe it was careless and suicidal.¹¹¹

On the morning of July 22nd President Jawara was at his office in State House when he received a report that there were accounts of a coup plot but the intelligence service deemed it just more rumours.¹¹² Less than an hour later his aide de camp arrived and announced that armed soldiers were on their way to State House. They reportedly far outnumbered and out armed the small contingent of Presidential Guards at State

¹⁰⁸ For tactical level details of the coup see Sarr, *Coup d'etat by the Gambia National Army* and Chongan, *The Price of Duty*.

¹⁰⁹ *Daily Observer*, June 22, 1994.

¹¹⁰ *The Point*, July 21, 1994.

¹¹¹ Ebrima Chongan is of the former opinion while Samsudeen Sarr is of the latter.

¹¹² Jawara had arrived home from England the day before and Gambian officers, including Yayha Jammeh, came to the airport armed to meet him. They were disarmed and sent away by the NATAG. In an interview just two days after the coup, Jammeh complains that at the airport he was publicly humiliated for "no apparent reason" and that this event "was the last straw." (*Daily Observer*, July 25, 1994) It remains unclear why the Gambian soldiers were armed but rumors began to spread that they had been planning to stage a coup at the airport.

House that day. Advisors recommended that Jawara and his family leave immediately and the American Ambassador offered to allow the president and his family refuge on the Navy ship which was anchored in Banjul port as part of the exercise. In Jawara's autobiography he makes a rather shocking admission by stating that this "was the first time I heard anything of a warship in our port." He later goes on to say

It was strange that in all the official messages I had received daily from Banjul, my Vice President and Minister of Defence had not mentioned to me that he and our security chiefs had given permission for anything as massive as a joint GNA and US Navy training exercise, complete with a warship. I thought if the armed forces of another sovereign nation were going to engage with our national army in any kind of bilateral exercise, it would have been important enough for the head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces of the host country, at home or abroad, to be informed of such an engagement.¹¹³

This statement is representative of Jawara's disconnect with the military. Although a strong statesman in many ways, he appeared very uninvolved in the military affairs of The Gambia.

Jawara followed the advice to vacate State House and boarded the U.S. ship. When word got out that there was a group of armed soldiers heading towards Banjul confusion ensued within the armed forces, in part because people were uncertain if this was part of the exercise. The Tactical Support Group (TSG) from the police force was deployed to stop the soldiers from reaching Banjul. There was a standoff between the TSG and the soldiers near the Denton Bridge (the same location where mutineers were stopped in 1992). However, the police put up little opposition when it was confirmed that the soldiers were far better armed. Therefore with little internal resistance and a president who had already fled, the soldiers had no trouble taking over the state. The whole affair was over by midday, with no one injured. Thus marking "the demise of the longest continuously surviving multiparty democracy in Africa" at the time as well as unseating the continent's longest serving national leader.¹¹⁴ The soldiers made the obligatory announcement over the radio that the constitution was suspended and a

¹¹³ Jawara, *Kairaba*, 380.

¹¹⁴ Wiseman and Vidler, "The July 1994 Coup d'état in The Gambia: The End of an Era?" 53.

curfew was in place. The announcement listed “rampant corruption and the retrogressive nature of the country” as the cause of the coup.¹¹⁵

BBC interviewed Jawara while he was still on the U.S. ship and asked why he thought the military had overthrown him. He replied that he heard complaints about salary, corruption, and “bad food in the barracks” and urged the soldiers to discuss the problems with him as their Commander-in-Chief.¹¹⁶ However, he seems to have forgotten that soldiers did attempt to discuss these problems twice during past mutinies. Jawara also quickly learned that he could not count on international support. Although the U.S. military was docked in the port, Washington did not give permission for the U.S. Navy to intervene. Senegal also refused to come to the aid as they had in the 1981 coup attempt but offered Jawara asylum in Dakar. Furthermore, the Nigerian contingent, who Jawara had trusted with his own protection and running the Gambian military, did not act to stop the coup. Numerous rumours and speculation continue to exist as to whether any of these three foreign powers were involved in planning or executing the coup, but there is little evidence to support the theory.

The fact that Jawara left immediately, before the soldiers even reached Banjul, makes it difficult to tell if the initial plan was to arrive at State House to make demands or arrive at State House to take over.¹¹⁷ In many ways the scenario in Banjul in 1994 was similar to that of Freetown in 1992, as described in the previous Chapter. The events in Banjul in 1994 can serve as another example of the blurred line between mutinies and coups, particularly at the execution phase.

Lieutenant Yahya Jammeh was announced to be the head of the new ruling council, named the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC). According to an officer involved in the events, this name was chosen based on the Valentine Strasser’s military junta (named the National Provisional Ruling Council- NPRC), whom the

¹¹⁵ A text of the radio announcement can be found in *Foroyaa*, July 24, 1994.

¹¹⁶ Transcript of the interview published in *Foroyaa* July 24, 1994.

¹¹⁷ Military and police officers who were involved in the events explain that the key officers did not have a plan as to who would be in charge when the coup succeeded. This is confirmed with media reports that show that the new junta did not announce the council positions until days after the coup. Some take this to mean that they did not plan to take over and had to begin improvising when it turned out they were in control of the country. However, others note how heavily armed the soldiers were and conclude “these soldiers were not just trying to make a complaint.”

Gambian officers admired.¹¹⁸ The AFPRC looked similar to the NPRC in terms of the members' age (AFPRC members ranged from 25-30 years of age) and minimal advanced education and international experience.¹¹⁹ Gambia's AFPRC was even more junior in rank than Sierra Leone's NPRC, consisting of one Lieutenant (Yahya Jammeh) and three 2nd Lieutenants (Sana Sabally, Edward Singateh and Sadibou Haidara).

The anger of the junior ranks towards their senior officers, which was highlighted during the 1991 and 1992 mutinies, was acted upon by these junior officers. The few senior officers that were either loyal enough or bold enough to stand by while the junior soldiers rebelled were rounded up and arrested. A senior officer at the time, stated that he was "shocked" to learn that a Sergeant was in charge of the arrested senior officers.¹²⁰ Another former soldier also noted the officers' surprise at being the brunt of the enlisted anger but claimed this should not have come as a shock given the history of mutinies and complaints about officers' behaviour.¹²¹ In the months and years following the coup nearly all officers from the rank of Captain and above were retired, many after being detained and some having died or been killed in prison.¹²²

Reporting at the time, and assessments written years after the event, claim that the coup was an extension of the previous complaints over non-payment of the ECOMOG mission.¹²³ However, I do not regard this as an accurate portrayal of the events. None of the key soldiers in the July 22nd coup were part of the ECOMOG deployments. In fact, most of those that orchestrated the coup were on the opposing side of the mutinies. Singateh was one of the soldiers that put down the mutiny on the Denton bridge in 1992.¹²⁴ Sabally had the unfortunate luck of being on duty at Yundum barracks when the ECOMOG soldiers started the mutiny in 1992. He was investigated

¹¹⁸ Sarr, *Coup d'etat by the Gambia National Army*, 131.

¹¹⁹ Hughes and Perfect, *A Political History of The Gambia*, 281.

¹²⁰ Sarr, *Coup d'etat by the Gambia National Army*, 89.

¹²¹ Author interview with military source C (former enlisted soldier), October 2012.

¹²² Sarr, *Coup d'etat by the Gambia National Army*, 19; There have been numerous deaths of military personnel at the hands of the AFRC in later years of the regime's rule. For more details on this topic see Chapter 6 Abdoulaye Saine *The Paradox of Third-Wave Democratization in Africa: The Gambia under AFPRC-APRC Rule, 1994-2008*.

¹²³ Some examples include *Africa South of the Sahara*, 1995 edition and *West Africa*, August 1-7, 1994.

¹²⁴ Sarr, *Coup d'etat by the Gambia National Army*, 41.

for involvement but found innocent.¹²⁵ Jammeh was in the gendarmerie at the time and in charge of the military police and thus also involved in restraining the mutineers who were arrested by the gendarmerie.¹²⁶ Furthermore, although the soldiers who overthrew the government did make complaints about pay when they came to power, they never claimed it was payment from the ECOMOG mission. There seems to be particular misperceptions about Jammeh's involvement in ECOMOG. In numerous conversations with Gambian civilians they have told me that Jammeh was a part of the ECOMOG deployment in Liberia. This is backed up by academics, for example, Adekeye Adebajo writes that Jammeh "himself served with ECOMOG in Liberia."¹²⁷ However, this appears to be only a rumour. Military sources that I interviewed say he never served in Liberia (or elsewhere abroad) and his official biography online does not list any deployments.¹²⁸ Furthermore, in the first press conference conducted by the AFPRC a journalist specifically asked if the soldiers' grievances were related to the Liberia mission, to which Jammeh responded no.¹²⁹

There were individuals involved in the coup who had been on the ECOMOG deployments because by 1994 there had been numerous iterations of Gambian deployments to Liberia, but as earlier described not all former ECOMOG members had issues with their pay. Sarr believes that even after the mutineers' payment issues were resolved, many of the soldiers still wished "doom and gloom" on the government and military hierarchy. Therefore it may have been easier to motivate the veterans but there is no indication that deployment payments were still a concern in 1994, particularly for the four officers leading the coup.

The coup in 1994 should not be seen as a direct continuation of the 1991 and 1992 mutinies but rather the mutinies were an early warning system for the discontent that fuelled the coup. All three groups of soldiers had similar complaints, particularly about leadership and corruption. The fact that the 1991 and 1992 mutineers and the 1994 coup makers came from different sectors of the military (the former recently

¹²⁵ Ibid., 91.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 129.

¹²⁷ Adebajo, *Liberia's Civil War: Nigeria, ECOMOG, and Regional Security in West Africa*, 143.

¹²⁸ President Jammeh's official biography can be found on The Gambia State House webpage at <http://www.statehouse.gm/president.html>.

¹²⁹ Transcript of the press conference can be found in *Foroyaa* July 29, 1994.

deployed rank and file, the latter junior officers) but had very similar grievances, shows that the issues were pervasive in the military, not limited to one particular unit or rank.

The past mutinies may have actually aided the 1994 coup leaders in terms of logistics. The Assistant General of Police Operations admits that when he received intelligence about soldiers making their way to Banjul on July 22 he believed it was just “another mutiny within the military.”¹³⁰ The Vice President reportedly also told the American Ambassador a similar account that the disturbance was just another demonstration. Since the top levels of the military and civilian hierarchies saw the event as a “mere” mutiny not a coup, it likely bought the rebellious soldiers more time. The government and military did not respond as forcefully or quickly as they could have. These comments also shows that leaders, both military and civilian, often do not take mutinies as a serious threat. This is understandable, particularly in the case of The Gambia, since mutinies on their own did not lead to major political upheaval or loss of life. However, this is a nearsighted view and treats mutinies as acts of indiscipline, rather than warnings of serious problems within the force.

6.8 Potential Problems Below the Surface

In the nearly twenty years since Jammeh came to power there are some tangible improvements in the country, such as a national university and improved roads and infrastructure. However, civil liberties and human rights have been abandoned, leading The Gambia to take the opposite path to most countries in the region, many of which have seen both improve since the 1990s. For example, The 2011 Economist Intelligence Unit’s *Democracy Index* places The Gambia in the “Authoritarian Regime” category and places the country in the bottom quarter of all countries worldwide in terms of democratic practices (and furthermore Gambia’s ranking has continually dropped over the last 5 years).¹³¹ In 2014 Freedom House put The Gambia in its lowest category,

¹³⁰ Chongan, *The Price of Duty*, 8.

¹³¹ The Economist Intelligence Unit, Democracy Index 2011,

http://www.sida.se/Global/About%20Sida/Sida%20arbetar%20vi/EIU_Democracy_Index_Dec2011.pdf

“Not Free,” in terms of civil and political liberties, a downgrade from previous years in which it was deemed “partially free.”¹³² Additionally, Amnesty International has continually issued reports about forced disappearances and unlawful killings.¹³³

The repressive environment in The Gambia today, made it the most difficult of the three case studies to attempt to get an assessment of the potential for a future mutiny. It would be unwise for me to ask about future revolts within The Gambia and even more dangerous for an interviewee to offer a prediction. However, I was surprised that one individual who has long worked for the government in The Gambia openly explained “from the surface the military appears calm but inside it is not.” This source went on to state “Gambians are very nervous at the moment, everyone is expecting a coup but no one will talk about it, some are wishing it, some are dreading it.” The source concluded with a shadowy statement that “military boys” are “good at hiding what they are thinking until the right time.”¹³⁴

If the citizens within The Gambia are hiding what they really think, the opposite can be said about many of the Diaspora community, who are the harshest critics of Jammeh. Interviewees from this sector nearly all expressed opinions that a military coup is a likely scenario within The Gambia. However, when I asked if a mutiny over pay or conditions, without a goal of taking political power was likely, most answered no. They commented that a mutiny scenario would be very dangerous for soldiers, especially given the large number who have previously been arrested and accused of plotting a coup, several of who have recently been executed for their alleged involvement. Some feared that a coup would be a violent and bloody affair, whereas another exclaimed that he thought it would involve an isolated attack.¹³⁵ The commonality to the various guesses is that anyone with grievances within the military would not risk making those public through a mutiny, but rather would have to

¹³² Freedom House, *Freedoms of the World*, 2014,

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/country/gambia#.U0LGShAE5s>

¹³³ Amnesty International, *Annual Report 2012, Gambia*,

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/gambia/report-2012>

¹³⁴ Author confidential interview, May 2012.

¹³⁵ Many of the predictions involved comparisons to other African examples. One person said there would be a scenario like Guinea Bissau in 2009, another that it would look like Niger in 1999 and yet another predicted a situation like Democratic Republic of Congo in 2001.

completely remove the head of state from power. This supports the theory proposed in Chapter Three that mutinies are less likely under authoritative regimes. Mutinies require a reasonable chance that the government will respond and most seemed to think that Jammeh would be unlikely to do so.

Yet all of these predictions are based on the premise that the military is discontented. The secretiveness of the military sector in The Gambia makes this difficult to assess. Soldiers interviewed in The Gambia had only positive things to say. One soldier exclaimed "we are extremely happy about what he (Jammeh) is doing for the armed forces, he is one of us, you know what we say, once a soldier always a soldier, everyone is happy."¹³⁶ While this individual may indeed be happy, I would not have expected a less enthusiastic response while at the military headquarters in Banjul, just blocks from State House. While interviews with soldiers in The Gambia uncovered some valuable information about past mutinies, they were not helpful in assessing the current state of affairs. This point was driven home by one officer telling me I could only ask questions to him and his men about events under the Jawara regime; any question about the Jammeh regime was off limits.

Still it could very well be the case that most soldiers in the Gambia are content and not interested in a mutiny or coup. Many interviewees note that the military is very well taken care of. Jammeh knows first-hand the danger of a disgruntled military and likely works to keep them satisfied. However, there are signs of instability. There have been numerous reported coup plots and many military arrests made as a result. There was a joke told to me on a couple occasions in The Gambia that starts by asking if I knew where the Gambian Fourth Battalion is located. The Gambia only has three battalions so the answer to the joke is Mile Two Prison. This dark humour shows that people are widely aware of the fact that there are many former military personnel locked away in the country's only prison. Jammeh is also known for not shying away from firing people, both military and civilians of any rank. Whereas this could leave a large number of vengeful ex-military members, one source explained that most military members of an officer rank who are reportedly "fired" are usually then given a job

¹³⁶ Author interview with military source B (current enlisted soldier), May 2012.

within the government. One final point of potential discontent is that ethnicity within the military appears to be a growing issue. At the time of the coup, ethnicity within the military did not seem to be a major factor for promotion. The fact that the four members of the AFPRC were from four different ethnic groups can be seen to represent the ethnic diversity in the armed forces at the time.¹³⁷ However, in recent years there are many accusations that Jammeh's Jola ethnic group have been favoured for promotion and key positions (despite their minority status within the country).¹³⁸

6.9 Conclusion

The mutinies in The Gambia in 1991 and 1992 were initially triggered by salary complaints but underlying these grievances were accusations of corruption, mismanagement and general distrust of the senior ranks in the hierarchy. While the mutineers may have been the first to vocalize these complaints publicly, many of the issues had deep roots and resonated with larger sectors of the military. The government viewed the mutinies as a pay dispute, and largely treated them as such, a common pattern in mutinies and one which this thesis attempts to dispel. The government addressed the deployment pay issue but did not appropriately handle the more systemic issues. Little was done to develop more professional Gambian military leadership or address the accusations of inherent favouritism, nepotism, and corruption.

The arrival of the NATAG contingent, which were invited by the Gambian government following the first round of mutinies, further exacerbated the problems as the Nigerian officers were seen as another hindrance to advancement, particularly by the junior officers. Whereas the 1991 and 1992 mutinies were limited to enlisted ranks from a specific unit, the response to the mutiny actually brought a wider range of personnel into the camp of disgruntled soldiers. The dissatisfaction of the junior ranks under NATAG leadership ultimately led to a third revolt in 1994, which ended in a coup. The

¹³⁷ Hughes and Perfect, *A Political History of The Gambia*, 281-282.

¹³⁸ Author interview with Dr. Abdoulaye Saine, June 2012; Author interview with U.S. based security analyst, June 2012.

case of mutinies in the Gambia demonstrates potential unintended consequences of mutinies. What was at the time viewed as simply a call for pay (and a fairly modest call at that) contributed to a cycle of events that drastically changed the country.

The ECOMOG soldiers in The Gambia are similar to the Tiger unit in Sierra Leone, both in their complaints and their deployment experiences. The cohesiveness needed for a mutiny was likely developed during the shared deployment experience to Liberia. The Gambian soldiers returned with a heightened view of their own role and worth within the military, a trend discussed in Chapter Four. The Gambian mutinies also exhibit mutinies as a form of communication. Soldiers first attempted to open a dialogue with the government by bringing their complaints to the media. When that failed they went directly to the president. This tactic was aided by civil liberties in The Gambia at the time, which allowed for generally free reporting on the story and a fair trial for the mutineers. The lack of similar freedoms today as well as a neglect for human rights under the current regime may decrease the likelihood of mutinies in The Gambia in the near term.

Chapter Seven- An Escalating Cycle of Mutinies: Case Study of Burkina Faso

7.1 Introduction

In Burkina Faso in 2011, mass military mutinies followed widespread civilian protests causing many to speculate that the end of President Blaise Compaoré's quarter century rule was near. A brief history of revolts in Burkina Faso will show that while the crisis of 2011 was exceptional in its size and thus severity, it follows a pattern of previous similar incidents. The chapter will then examine the civilian demonstrations that took place in Burkina Faso in order to set the stage for the military mutinies and illustrate how many of the themes expressed in civilian protests overlapped with military complaints. Next, the 2011 mutinies will be chronicled, showing the various ways in which the government attempted to quell the rebellion and how after over two months they finally succeeded in ending the unrest.

The second half of the chapter will delve deeper into the internal tensions in the military. The large number of participants, their claims, and their history of mutinying suggests that there are significant tensions within the Burkinabé military structure. Similar to other violent mass mutinies, as described in Chapter Two, the Burkinabé soldiers were loosely united in anger and frustrations, rather than unified around a specific goal or experience. Corruption and favouritism in recruitment and deployment selection will be examined to show their relation to the lack of trust among ranks and general indiscipline observed during the mutinies. The mutinies were so widespread that sectors of the military that did not participate became the exception. I will examine the two main groups not involved, the officers and the gendarmerie, and speculate as to why these sectors did not join with their rebellious colleagues.

This case study is distinct from the other two in that the mutinies occurred alongside civilian protests, a trend that is seen in other mutinies throughout the region. I will pay particular attention to the complex relationship between civilians and the

military (the junior ranks specifically) to explain why soldiers may have been inspired by the civilian movement. Additionally, I will evaluate how the civilian population interpreted the military revolts. President Compaoré took many measures to appease both the civilian and military dissatisfaction and this chapter will conclude with an examination of the changes that have occurred since the crisis, in particular to determine if they will be enough to put an end to the mutiny cycle.

7.2 A Temporary Civilian-Military Union

“Our country is the champion of the coup d’état” exclaimed the editorial chief of a major radio station in Ouagadougou, and he was not exaggerating.¹ Burkina Faso holds the record, alongside Nigeria and Benin, for the most successful coups in all of sub-Saharan Africa, no small feat given the competition. In addition to six successful coups, one failed coup attempt, and at least six recorded coup plots, the Burkinabé military has also had its fair share of mutinies.²

Until 2011, the most well known mutiny in Burkina Faso occurred in the southern city of Po in 1983. The incident was sparked by the arrest of Captain Thomas Sankara, a highly popular and revolutionary figure, over charges of treason.³ Upon hearing of his arrest, the soldiers in Po, led by Sankara’s close friend Captain Blaise Compaoré, took control of the city, including police and customs stations and cut telephone communication to the capital. The mutineers set up road blocks and for over two weeks the soldiers had complete control of the city. Reports from the time claim the atmosphere was tense but there does not appear to have been any violence. The soldiers were clear in their demands; they wanted an unconditional release of their comrade, Captain Sankara.⁴

¹ Author interview with editorial chief for private radio station, March 2012.

² McGowan, “African Military coups d’état, 1956-2001: Frequency, Trends, and Distribution,” 367.

³ Micheal Wilkins, “The Death of Thomas Sankara and the Rectification of the People’s Revolution in Burkina Faso,” *African Affairs* Vol.88 No.352 (Jul 1989): 381.

⁴ *Africa Research Bulletin* May 1983, 6849; *Africa Research Bulletin* June 1983, 6684; *Africa Confidential* June 8 1983, 7-8, *West Africa* June 27, 1983, 1490-1491.

At the same time that the commandos were mutinying in Po, students throughout the country were protesting on the street for Sankara's release.⁵ The government gave in and released Sankara although still kept him under house arrest. However, this did not prove to be the end of the saga and tension between the government and Sankara, along with his many followers (both military and civilian), continued. Less than two months after the Po mutiny, the military overthrew President Ouedraogo (who had come to power in a coup just a year earlier) and established a ruling council called the Conseil National de la Révolution (CNR), headed by Sankara.⁶ The civilian involvement in demanding the release of Sankara and later supporting the coup, led Sankara to claim the overthrow of Ouedraogo was a popular revolution, not a simple military coup.⁷

The civilian and military sectors developed a close relationship during this period, which can help explain the crisis in 2011, as will be detailed later in the chapter. Even before gaining political power, Sankara made efforts to break down the barriers between the civilian population and the military, causing an "unheard of change of attitude."⁸ For example, when he was in charge of the commando unit in Po, soldiers were encouraged to integrate with civilians. They assisted with the local harvesting, had joint football teams and formed an orchestra together.⁹ Sankara's integration of civilian and military sectors was more than just a social assimilation. This young, charismatic, figure espoused ideas that mixed populism, Marxism-Leninism, pan-Africanism and nationalism, similar to the ideas of Jerry Rawlings in Ghana at the time.¹⁰ His calls for class equality along with basics such as "food, clean drinking water, clothes, housing, schools, and health" made him highly popular among the masses in Burkina Faso, which was at the time ranked as the third poorest country in the world.¹¹ He had a particularly strong following amongst the youth, a popularity that persists in Burkina Faso today.

⁵ Victoria Brittain, "Introduction to Sankara and Burkina Faso," *Review of African Political Economy* No.32 (Apr 1985): 45.

⁶ Pierre Englebert, *Burkina Faso: Unsteady Statehood in West Africa* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996): 55.

⁷ Brittain, "Introduction to Sankara and Burkina Faso," 45.

⁸ Ibid., 42.

⁹ Ibid., 42.

¹⁰ Englebert, *Burkina Faso: Unsteady Statehood in West Africa*, 152-155.

¹¹ Ibid., 43.

Unlike Strasser and Jammeh, who also espoused populist ideas, Sankara proved his campaign was not only rhetoric, which increased his popularity, particularly among the lower economic classes. He made visible changes to remove symbols of government wealth and excess with actions such as auctioning the government's fleet of Mercedes vehicles and readjusting government salaries so that ministers and public servants all made the same salary. He did not exempt himself from the policy and collected the same wages as other civil servants. Even as Head of State he ate alongside the rank and file soldiers in the mess hall.¹²

Sankara and the CNR made an effort to change the way the military was viewed by the population, as well as the way the military viewed its own role. Whereas traditionally the military in Burkina Faso (and elsewhere in the region) was seen as an extension of an often unpopular regime, Sankara argued that they should be a "component of the people".¹³ He publicly stated

the new soldier must live and suffer among the people to which he belongs. The days of the free-spending army are over. From now on, besides handling arms, the army will work in the fields and raise cattle sheep and poultry. It will build schools and health clinics and ensure their functioning.¹⁴

Most military leaders who come to power in a coup make attempts to win the military over with added equipment, salaries, or prestige but instead Sankara in a way "demoted" the military to civilian roles. Furthermore, during this period the military became "juniorized", giving unprecedented power and influence to the junior ranks. The shared grievances between civilians and military as well as the empowerment of junior ranks over their seniors are traits seen in the 2011 mutinies.

Sankara and the CNR had plenty of critics at home and abroad and the implementation of their program was not without fault. The revolutionary ideas of Sankara never truly came to fruition and sections of the military can be seen to have

¹² Wilkins, "The Death of Thomas Sankara and the Rectification of the People's Revolution in Burkina Faso," 383.

¹³ *West Africa*, August 20, 1983.

¹⁴ Thomas Sankara, "Political Orientation Speech" presented by Sankara on behalf of the NCR, October 2, 1983, from *Thomas Sankara: Speeches from the Burkina Faso Revolution 1983-87* (Pathfinder Press:2002): 47.

killed the revolutionary spirit, both figuratively and literally. In 1987, less than four years after coming to power, Sankara was assassinated. It is widely believed that Compaoré, Sankara's closest ally, was responsible for the order to kill Sankara but despite ongoing efforts by groups to prove this claim, it remains unsubstantiated. With the death of Sankara, Compaoré became president, a position he still holds today. By the time of Sankara's death, he had come under criticism for using repressive techniques to limit opposition. The harmonious relationship between the civilian sectors and military that Sankara initially envisioned did not last, and therefore it would be inaccurate to claim that there is an exceptionally strong civil military relationship in Burkina Faso. Instead, it is more realistic to say that the civilian and military sectors have a complex relationship and one in which there is a history of overlap between civilian and military movements, particularly at the lower economic class level.

7.3 A Tested Tactic

Compaoré retired his fatigues and was elected as a civilian in 1991, 1998, 2005, and 2010. His numerous wins should not be mistaken for overwhelming popularity. There are widespread restrictions on opposition parties and voter turn out in presidential elections is low. For example, voter turnout in the 2010 election was 54 percent, down from 57 percent in 2005.¹⁵ Despite Compaoré's military background and his history of leading military upheavals (both the mutiny in 1982 and coups in 1983 and 1987), he has not been able to keep the military satisfied. Soldiers in Burkina Faso have used mutinies as a means of expressing their dissatisfaction on a fairly regular basis since the late 1990s.

In July 1999 soldiers who returned from Central African Republic after participating in the MINURCA peacekeeping mission staged a protest over unpaid

¹⁵ Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance,
<http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?CountryCode=BF>

mission subsidies.¹⁶ The mutineers also claimed that while on the mission they made \$230 a month while their counterparts from Mali made \$610 and had therefore calculated that the government owed them (collectively) \$20 million in back pay.¹⁷ This is consistent with patterns discussed in Chapter Four, in which dissatisfaction following peacekeeping deployments is often related to the ability of the soldiers to compare their conditions and pay with those from other countries.

The protest quickly spread beyond the peacekeepers to other garrisons throughout the country and these soldiers added complaints about living allowances. They also made specific demands that the government return fees that had been deducted from their salary to pay for new soldier housing because the housing was never built. They accused senior officers of embezzling the funds that were meant for the housing project.¹⁸ During the mutiny the soldiers kidnapped Colonel Kouame Louge, a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.¹⁹ NCOs were used as liaisons between the protesting soldiers and the military hierarchy and the soldiers were paid at least part of the amount they demanded.²⁰ The 1999 revolts were similar to the events in 2011 because they occurred amidst ongoing demonstrations by civilians over the suspected murder of journalist Nibert Zongo by government forces.²¹

There were also mutinies by soldiers in 2003, 2006, and 2007. The incident in 2006 was the most threatening of this series. In December 2006, during a conflict between police and soldiers, a police officer shot and killed a soldier. In response the soldiers then attacked police stations (some of which they set on fire) and freed over 600 prisoners from jail. As a result the ECOWAS Heads of State summit scheduled for Ouagadougou that week was postponed. A week after the incident began “a first meeting took place between soldiers and the MoD [Ministry of Defence]. Surprisingly, instead of complaining about their fellow deceased, they demanded for improvement of

¹⁶ Col HL Nombre, “Civil-Military Relations and National Security in Burkina Faso: An Assessment,” July 2008, 29.

¹⁷ “Burkina Faso soldiers end protest,” *BBC*, July 15, 1999.

¹⁸ “Soldiers End Mutiny in Burkina Faso,” *AP*, July 15, 1999.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Nombre, “Civil-Military Relations and National Security in Burkina Faso: An Assessment,” July 2008, 29.

²¹ Ernest Harsch, “Trop, c’est trop! Civil Insurgence in Burkina Faso 1989-1999” *Review of African Political Economy* 26, no.81(Sep. 1999): 401.

accommodation, welfare allowances and dressing.”²² As will be described below, this escalation of demands also characterizes the 2011 mutinies.

Burkinabé Colonel Nombre argues that soldiers were never penalized for their participation in these events and there were never serious assessments conducted to determine the root causes of the mutinies. In a report he wrote in 2008 he expressed concern about the indiscipline within the military and argued that a major military restructuring was needed to address the problem.²³ However it does not appear that significant changes were made in the military even after numerous demonstrations and mutinies. In response to the severed relationship between the army and police, the Ministry of Defence announced a plan to move the urban military bases farther outside of towns. The ministry believed that this would separate the soldiers from their rivals, the police, and reduce the chances of another altercation between the two. However, this angered the soldiers who wanted to remain close to their families in town. Soldiers added this to their complaints about military retirement age and demonstrated in October of 2007. A commission was set up and led by President Compaoré’s brother, to negotiate between the soldiers and senior military leadership and resulted in the mutineers receiving part of their demands.²⁴ The events in 2011 should be viewed in the context of these series of mutinies. Soldiers were likely emboldened by the immediate material success of their past revolts but also still dissatisfied that the larger issues, such as corruption, went unaddressed.

7.4 Familiar Dissatisfaction Reignited

²² Nombre, “Civil-Military Relations and National Security in Burkina Faso: An Assessment,” 34; Similar account provided in “Fragile Democracy Being Tested,” *IRIN*, December 27, 2006.

²³ Nombre, “Civil-Military Relations and National Security in Burkina Faso: An Assessment,” 35.

²⁴ *American Embassy Ouagadougou*, “Burkina Faso: Military Retirees Surprise Government with Aggressive Demands for Improved Benefits, Movement of Camps Outside of Main Cities,” April 28, 2008.

The military mutinies of 2011 were directly preceded by and overlapped with the largest civilian demonstrations seen in Burkina Faso since at least 1998-1999.²⁵ During interviews in Burkina Faso, locals referred to the mutinies and civilian demonstrations collectively as “the 2011 crisis.” The civilian side of this crisis began with protests following the arrest and death of a student named Justin Zongo in Koudougou in late February 2011.²⁶ The government made an official statement claiming that Zongo died in custody of meningitis, while rumours that he was beaten to death by police quickly spread. Students throughout the country were outraged that no one was charged with Zongo’s death. Within two weeks, the protests spread to dozens of cities throughout the country.

As the protests escalated so did the scope of the grievances. It was no longer just about the perceived injustice of the Zongo case but about other suspected murders that had not been accounted for. Chrysogone Zougmore, President of Burkina Faso’s main human rights organization, Mouvement Burkinabé des Droits de l’Homme et des Peuples (MBDHP), said “the crisis was one of years of injustice.”²⁷ Bazie Bassolina, Secretary General of the confederation of labour unions, CGT-B, explained that the death of Zongo in police custody was not a one-time event but rather the latest in a series of suspicious deaths over decades, which many hold the government responsible for.²⁸ Other infamous examples he cited were the death of Thomas Sankara (1987), medical student and activist Dabo Boukary (1990), and director of the newspaper *L’indépendant* Norbert Zongo.²⁹ Hamidou Idogo, editor and chief of *Journal du Jeudi*, expressed a similar opinion by stating “here in our country we don’t trust authorities anymore. There is crime in every domain and no justice.”³⁰ For many interviewees, like Idogo, the crisis of 2011 was first and foremost an issue of justice and human rights.

²⁵ Large country-wide demonstrations occurred in 1998 when government officials were suspected of killing journalist Norbert Zongo.

²⁶ Justin Zongo is not a direct relative of Norbert Zongo but some speculate that the matching surname brought back memories of Norbert Zongo’s suspected murder, further fueling the anger of protestors.

²⁷ Author interview with Chrysogone Zougmore, President of MBDHP, March 2012.

²⁸ Author interview, March 2012; CGT-B is the abbreviation for Confédération Générale du Travail du Burkina, a confederation of 12 national trade unions.

²⁹ Author interview with Bazie Bassolina, Secretary General of CGT-B, March 2012.

³⁰ Author interview with Hamidou Idogo, Editor and Chief of *Journal du Jeudi*, March 2012.

In addition to the issue of justice, labour unions, civil society groups, and individuals began to protest over the high cost of living and low wages, grievances that much of the country could relate to. The demonstrations grew in size, location, and cause, with various groups expressing loosely related complaints. Cotton growers in Bobo Dioulasso demonstrated their anger at low cotton prices, while students in Koudougou took to the streets over police repression, teachers in Gaoua demanded higher living allowances and unions in Ouagadougou organized a march calling for an increase in public sector salaries.³¹ Although the specific requests differed, they all shared and expressed feelings of dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in Burkina Faso.

Tensions rose along with the grievances and the protests turned destructive. Heavy handed police responses led to civilian injuries and deaths, further incensing the protesters. Police stations, government buildings, and the ruling party headquarters were vandalized and some set on fire by angry mobs. The targets of destruction were a clear indication that the demonstrators placed the blame on the government. This was confirmed through interviews as well. When asked to explain the cause of the crisis one journalist said, “the crisis is complex but to say it simply, the explanation is bad governance.”³² The media drew attention to the fact that Compaoré has been in power since 1987 and implied that it was time for a leadership change, calling the events a “crisis of confidence.”³³ Similarly, a Burkinabé academic explained that Burkina Faso is a “false democracy”, one in which real opposition is not allowed. He argued that it was the lack of democratic representation that led to the widespread demonstrations. He noted, “When people can’t find a legal solution to their problems they find other ways...if citizens are not well treated and see their rights are in danger, we have a revolt.”³⁴

³¹ S. Coulibaly, “Socio-political Crisis in Burkina Faso in 2011 From a Citizen Perspective,” July 7, 2011; “Mort d’un élève à Koudougou: Violence et répression excessives,” *Bendré*, February 28, 2011; “Burkina Faso teacher’s strike: Union Agrees Deal”, *BBC*, May 25, 2011.

³² Author interview with editorial chief for private radio station, March 2012.

³³ Some examples of this type of rhetoric in the local media include *L’indépendant*, N9 March 1, 2011, *Le reporter*, N66, 15-31 March, 2011 and *L’observateur Paalga*, N7840, 16 March, 2011.

³⁴ Author interview with Professor A, March 2012.

7.5 The Military Enters the Scene

The situation in Burkina Faso went from bad to worse when after a month of civilian protests, the military started their own demonstrations. The initial cause of the military mutinies was not directly related to the initial cause of the civilian crisis, although both shared complaints about the justice system. Just as the civilian demonstrations quickly added grievances and participants, so did the military demonstration. As the mutinies grew, one trait that remained consistent was that all participants were amongst the enlisted ranks.³⁵

The initial mutiny was sparked by soldiers' objections to a court ruling. A group of five junior soldiers based in Ouagadougou were arrested after they allegedly beat and publicly humiliated a man who they accused of having inappropriate contact with the wife of a deployed soldier.³⁶ When the soldiers were given sentences ranging from fifteen to eighteen months in jail, their fellow soldiers took to the streets, firing their weapons in the air and eventually looting local shops in protest of the sentencing.

In interviews with Burkinabé soldiers, they explained that this unit was angry about the sentencing for two main reasons. The first is that they simply felt it was not deserved. They commented that the soldiers felt they were defending the honour of their colleague's wife and noted that any respectable man would agree with them. The second reason, and what one source called "the most important reason," was that the rank and file soldiers felt they were being unfairly punished due to their low rank.³⁷ One interviewee explained, "the guys had assumed that the higher officers would speak out on their behalf and they did not."³⁸ Another provided a similar account by stating "they were angry at their senior officers for not stepping in."³⁹ Through these statements it

³⁵ Author interview with military source AA (former officer, currently working in security sector), March 2012.

³⁶ Military sources were intentionally vague in providing details about what the incident entailed. One source told me that I would need to find a woman to tell me. Nearly all media reporting refers to the incident as a 'sex scandal' and the International Crisis Group explains that soldiers felt the civilian was "too forward" with the soldiers' wife.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Author interview with military source BB (former enlisted soldier, currently working in security sector), March 2012.

³⁹ Author interview with military source AA (former officer, currently working in security sector), March 2012.

becomes clear that the military is accustomed to being above the law. This is confirmed in a leaked U.S. Embassy cable from 2009.⁴⁰ The report details a series of nine military tribunals involving eleven military members that were tried publicly with press in attendance. However, the majority of the cases involved driving infractions and there was one case of “desertion during times of peace.”⁴¹ The report concludes that the “Burkinabé military has been put on notice...the soldiers are being told that they no longer benefit from total immunity.”⁴² This indicates that it was unusual for soldiers to be held accountable for even small violations. However, the report was overly optimistic in assessing that these public trials would result in major changes and military members in 2011 still believed they were entitled to immunity from the law.

Soldiers explained that the mutineers were not only resentful that they were punished but also alleged that officers had done much worse in the past without having been charged.⁴³ For example, several different military sources told a story about an officer who had shot his wife and was simply moved to another base rather than charged with a criminal offense. Here the mutinying soldiers made similar accusations as the civilians by claiming that the law was selective. The soldiers never explicitly mentioned being inspired by the Justin Zongo case, but the movement likely fuelled the accusations of inequality within the legal system. It became easier for the soldiers to claim their case was mishandled when there were widespread public outcries about the poor state of the Burkinabé justice system.

It is also likely that the arrested soldiers were particularly offended by having been detained by the police. One military source explained, “it would be almost unheard of for a police officer to arrest someone in the military, even a junior member.”⁴⁴ There is a long rivalry between the military and police, as highlighted in the open conflict between the two groups in 2006.

In order to calm down the mutinying soldiers, the authorities released the arrested soldiers. However this angered the justice department who went on strike to

⁴⁰ American Embassy Ouagadougou, “Burkina Faso: Military Court Hands Out Sentences,” October 2009.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Author interview with military source AA (former officer, currently working in security sector), March 2012.

⁴⁴ Author interview with military source CC (international officer in Burkina Faso), March 2012.

protest. Additionally, traders and shop owners whose merchandise had been looted or destroyed by the mutineers began to demonstrate. At this point “the regime was faced with a multipronged protest which included the movement against impunity, traders, the justice department, and the army.”⁴⁵ Before the government could resolve this problem, a separate mutiny broke out in Fada N’Gourma, approximately 200 km east of Ouagadougou.

Much like the Ouagadougou mutiny, which occurred just a week earlier, the soldiers in Fada N’Gourma protested a court ruling. In this case the arrested soldier had been convicted of raping a minor. The residents of Fada N’Gourma, who had surely seen reporting of the destruction caused in the Ouagadougou mutiny, immediately closed shops and left the streets.⁴⁶ The soldiers fired weapons into the air and intimidated authorities into releasing their arrested comrade.⁴⁷ Professor Yonaba argues that the release of the soldiers in Ouagadougou and Fada N’Gourma was a major setback for the rights of the Burkinabé people.⁴⁸ Overruling the decision of the justice department due to the unruly behaviour of junior soldiers, further delegitimized the government who was viewed as extending the pattern of impunity for military personnel. It showed that the law was selective, justifying the civilian accusations about the Justin Zongo case and other previous unresolved crimes.

Although the initial demands of these soldiers from the 32nd Infantry Commando Regiment in Fada N’Gourma were met, the following day (March 29) they rebelled again. This time they fired a rocket at the courthouse.⁴⁹ The next day soldiers in Gaoua and Ouagadougou mutinied.⁵⁰ Whereas the first round of mutinies in Ouagadougou involved random attacks on shops and traders, the second round was more targeted. This time soldiers vandalized the houses of the Mayor of Ouagadougou and the Defence Minister. In response, the government imposed a curfew and President Compaoré

⁴⁵ Lila Chouli, “Peoples’ Revolt in Burkina Faso,” in Firoze Manji and Sokari Ekine, eds. *Africa Awakening: The Emerging Revolutions* (Oxford: Pambazuka Press, 2012): 138.

⁴⁶ “Burkina Troops Free Rapist Comrade,” *AFP*, March 28, 2011.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ S. Yonaba, “Mutineries de Militaires au Burkina Faso: L’Etat de droit mis à rude épreuve,” *Liberté* n33, September 2011, 10.

⁴⁹ “Burkinabé Soldiers Fire Rocket at Court,” *AFP*, March 29, 2011.

⁵⁰ Chouli, “Peoples’ Revolt in Burkina Faso,” 138.

agreed to meet with the discontented soldiers and civilians.⁵¹ Despite the meetings, which were mediated by religious and traditional leaders, another large strike took place on April 8, involving traders, civil society groups, political opposition supporters, and students. They expressed that they were still not satisfied with the government's response to their numerous complaints.⁵²

After two weeks of relative calm amongst the military, Compaoré faced his most serious threat on April 14 when his elite Presidential Guards (*Régiment de Sécurité Présidentiel* or RSP) revolted. This was the first time this unit had been involved in a mutiny.⁵³ The unit claimed their protest was over payment and housing allowances. The mutiny quickly spread to soldiers at Camp Lamizana in western Ouagadougou.⁵⁴ There were also widespread looting, car thefts, and reports of rape.⁵⁵ The chaotic atmosphere made it difficult to tell if the crimes were committed by military personnel or civilians, however it appears both sectors took part. Media outlets shut down adding to the residents' anxiety as they did not know what was going on.

President Compaoré's response shows the severity of the situation. Within a day of the RSP revolt he left the capital and took refuge in his hometown of Ziniare, 30 km north of the capital.⁵⁶ Just one day later President Compaoré dissolved the government, appointed a new cabinet and Prime Minister, replaced the Chiefs of Staff of the Army, Air Force, and Police and named himself Minister of Defence. The impact of these changes will be analyzed in more depth later in this chapter.

Compaoré quickly gave into the demands of the RSP and a spokesperson for the RSP publicly reaffirmed the unit's loyalty to the president. The spokesperson apologized for the damage caused by the RSP and called on other units to adhere to military discipline.⁵⁷ However, rather than calm the situation it seemed to inspire other units. Media reports quote soldiers stating that they wanted their pay and bonuses to be

⁵¹ "Compaore to Meet Troops Amid Protests," *AFP*, March 31, 2011.

⁵² Chouli, "Peoples' Revolt in Burkina Faso," 138.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁵⁴ "Gunfire Spread in Burkina Faso Capital," *AFP*, April 15, 2011.

⁵⁵ "Compaore Leaves Capital Amid Army Mutiny," *AFP*, April 15, 2011; "Troops Loot Burkina Faso for 2nd Night," *AP*, April 16, 2011.

⁵⁶ "Compaore Leave Capital Amid Army Mutiny," *AFP*, April 15, 2011.

⁵⁷ "Burkina Faso gets New PM, Mutiny Spreads," *AFP*, April 19, 2011.

equivalent to that of the RSP.⁵⁸ Soldiers in Tenkodogo, Kaya, and Po imitated earlier mutinies by firing weapons in the air, looting shops, seizing private vehicles and attacking the houses of senior officers.⁵⁹ The mutiny at Po had symbolic significance, as this was the same base from which Compaoré had launched a mutiny in 1983.

Not only did the mutiny contagion spread within the military, but it quickly infected the police force.⁶⁰ By the end of April the Republican Guards also joined the trend.⁶¹ Therefore, within a month of the initial Ouagadougou mutiny, nearly every branch of the security sector within every region of the country had taken part in a mutiny. One exception is the gendarmerie, which will be addressed later.

During this month of spreading mutinies, the civilian sector was also taking to the streets in a continuation of the protests that began over Justin Zongo's death and had escalated to economic and political demands for change. At times civilians and military seemed united in their calls for increased wages but in other incidents civilians directly protested against damage caused by the mutinies and criticized the government for not controlling the armed forces. On April 28 (two months after the start of the turmoil) the Prime Minister announced a series of changes in response to the widespread civilian and military demands. Key changes included the elimination of the development tax, reduction in the salary tax, and salary increases in the public sector as well as promises to charge senior officials involved in corruption. However, these changes only affected a minority of the population and did little for the bulk of the people who make a living from agriculture.⁶² Still, it did represent a government response to the civilian demands and the widespread protests became more sporadic.⁶³

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Chouli, "Peoples' Revolt in Burkina Faso," 139; "Burkina Army Revolt Spreads," *AFP*, April 17, 2011.

⁶⁰ "Burkina Faso troops and cops riot, loot," *AFP*, April 18, 2011.

⁶¹ Chouli, "Peoples' Revolt in Burkina Faso," 140.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ "Burkina Faso Lifts Curfew After Unrest," *SAPA*, May 17, 2011.

7.6 Mutiny Finale

Although the government seemed to have made progress on the civilian front, the military continued to express its dissatisfaction. New mutinies broke out in Po, Kaya, Dori, Tenkodogo, Dedougou, and Koupela in May.⁶⁴ It is difficult to tell how exactly these mutinies were resolved but it is likely agreements were made over salary or other material complaints.

After months of dealing with unruly soldiers, the government reached its breaking point at the beginning of June when soldiers in Bobo Dioulasso joined the revolt. Bobo Dioulasso is Burkina Faso's second largest city and home to the second largest military base (the largest in both cases being Ouagadougou). The city has a sizeable university student population and a reputation as a rebellious town.⁶⁵ After three days of destructive behaviour by soldiers which shut down the city, Compaoré sent members of the RSP, the Dedougou paratroopers and gendarmerie to "forcibly disarm" the mutineers.⁶⁶ Officially the attack left six mutineers and one civilian (a girl caught in the crossfire) dead. However, according to several military sources, the number of military casualties was much higher. Following the attack the government announced the dismissal of 566 soldiers, 217 of which were brought up on criminal charges.⁶⁷

What is unusual about the Burkina Faso mutinies is not that they ended violently, but that they did not end violently sooner. There are few cases in West Africa in which mutinies continued for such a long period before being forcibly put down. One explanation is that the government wanted to use all possible methods before resorting to force. One military interviewee explained that peaceful negotiation is "the Burkinabé way."⁶⁸ This may be part of the story as Burkina Faso does not have a history of civil war or armed rebellions and most past coups and mutinies have been relatively non-

⁶⁴ Chouli, "Peoples' Revolt in Burkina Faso," 143.

⁶⁵ Author interview with military source AA (former officer, currently working in security sector), March 2012; the gendarmeries that took part in the raid against the mutineers were specifically from the Security and Intervention Unit.

⁶⁶ Chouli, "Peoples' Revolt in Burkina Faso," 143; Author interview with military source BB (former enlisted soldier, currently working in security sector), March 2012.

⁶⁷ Chouli, "Peoples' Revolt in Burkina Faso," 143.

⁶⁸ Author interview with military source BB (former enlisted soldier, currently working in security sector), March 2012.

violent. However, the massive scale of the mutinies was also likely a reason Compaoré was reluctant to use physical force against mutineers. With nearly every sector of the security apparatus expressing their dissatisfaction, there was no guarantee that his orders would be carried through. Soldiers throughout the country expressed more loyalty towards each other than to their commanding officers or the Head of State.

This is the first time that mutinies in Burkina Faso have been dealt with in such a harsh manner. Whereas concessions were the norm in previous mutinies, perhaps a new precedent has been set, indicating a less tolerant attitude towards mutinies. Most respondents, both military and civilian, thought that the final attack on the mutineers was needed to end the months of ongoing revolts. For example, one military source explained, “the attack in Bobo was important because it helped the government reinstall confidence to the population.”⁶⁹ However, there was also concern about the number of dismissed soldiers. This issue will be addressed in more detail in the final section.

While the assault on the Bobo Dioulasso mutineers put an end to the 2011 mutinies, it may have come with unintended consequences. The International Crisis Group found that

The RSP’s role in the repression of the Bobo Dioulasso mutiny has widened the gap between the presidential guard and the rest of the military, all the more so because RSP personnel who participated in the mutinies have not been punished.⁷⁰

Similarly, a Burkinabé professor argued that using one branch of the military against another has the potential to divide the force and to cause long term resentment. He believes that the incident in Bobo Dioulasso “is just accumulating problems for a future crisis.”⁷¹

7.7 The Underlying Causes

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ *International Crisis Group*, “Burkina Faso: With or Without Compaoré, Times of Uncertainty,” Africa Report No. 205, July 22, 2013.

⁷¹ Author interview with Professor A, March 2012.

The massive scale of the Burkina Faso mutinies makes it more difficult to put a face to the mutineers than in the cases examined in Sierra Leone or The Gambia. As opposed to the earlier case studies in which soldiers were fairly clear about their grievances, in Burkina Faso it was often difficult to tell what the soldiers wanted from their revolt. Even military respondents often provided vague explanations. For example, one military source said he felt that the soldiers were simply taking advantage of the weak position of the government. He explained that the soldiers began making demands for material items such as uniforms, boots, and belts, items that they may have desired but would not have normally orchestrated a mutiny over.⁷² Another soldier shared a similar perception by stating that the revolt was simply a matter of human nature, of people always wanting more than they have.⁷³

Media reported that the mutinies were sparked because soldiers had not been paid; however several soldiers stated that this was inaccurate.⁷⁴ Instead, they explained that the mutineers objected to a more nuanced issue of living allowances.⁷⁵ Soldiers are entitled to a salary and a living allowance and the living allowance is easier to manipulate.⁷⁶ The living allowance goes towards housing and food, which is often provided by the military and thus not paid in full. Soldiers perceived that they should be getting more/better food and housing for the amount that their living allowance is worth. Therefore, as one enlisted soldiers explained, “the main thing is the living conditions.”⁷⁷ There were also allegations that senior officers were taking part of this allowance for their own purposes.⁷⁸

While interviewees seemed to find it difficult to pinpoint the cause of the 2011 mutinies, a more general question of “why is there so much indiscipline within the military” quickly led to detailed and animated responses. Most of the responses can be

⁷² Author interview with military source E (current enlisted soldier), March 2012.

⁷³ Author interview with military source Z (current enlisted soldier), March 2012.

⁷⁴ Author interview with military source E (current enlisted soldier), March 2012; Author interview with military source Z (current enlisted soldier), March 2012.

⁷⁵ Author interview with military source BB (former enlisted soldier, currently working in security sector), March 2012.

⁷⁶ Author interview with military source CC (international officer in Burkina Faso), March 2012.

⁷⁷ Author interview with military source E (current enlisted soldier), March 2012.

⁷⁸ Interview with military source CC (international officer in Burkina Faso), March 2012, and confirmed in various other conversations.

summarized into issues of pervasive corruption and favouritism within the military. Numerous respondents, both civilian and military, stated that the problems begin with the recruitment process, which they argued has become very personalized. One military source went into great detail about a concept within the Burkinabé military called “Command Lists.” He explained

So say the military is recruiting 500 individuals. The head of the army will get to submit 10 names, then the regional commander submits 10, then the base commander, and so on, even down to the local chief. These individuals are hand selected based on their affiliation and do not have to pass the other requirements, such as the physical tests. But those that have no affiliation must pass strict tests. Then when they get to basic training, the trainers know who is from the list, they are concerned about being too harsh on those that were selected by top officers. So those individuals get a pass again, while the others are treated very poorly. Everyone understands the system and it creates major divides from the start.⁷⁹

Other military sources made similar accusations, one stated, “rich people send their sons and daughters to the military and no one can bother them.”⁸⁰ Another soldier exclaimed “officers can bring their children into the military, this is a problem because their superiors are afraid to discipline them because they are the sons of their boss.”⁸¹ Yet another soldier alleged, “there is favouritism in recruiting, they don’t see who is best, they select sons of officers.”⁸²

The recruitment issue has become particularly relevant in recent years as Burkina Faso recruited 2,000 individuals between 2008 and 2011.⁸³ This is a substantial number considering the entire force is between 7,000 and 8,000 (not including the gendarmerie). The increased recruitment was partially due to an aging force; however it was also a response to Burkina Faso’s increased involvement in peacekeeping missions. Burkina

⁷⁹ Author interview with military source AA (former officer, currently working in security sector), March 2012.

⁸⁰ Author interview with military source BB (former enlisted soldier, currently working in security sector), March 2012.

⁸¹ Author interview with military source Z (current enlisted soldier), March 2012.

⁸² Author interview with military source E (current enlisted soldier), March 2012.

⁸³ *International Crisis Group*, “Burkina Faso: With or Without Compaoré, Times of Uncertainty,” 32.

Faso currently has around ten percent of its military deployed on the Darfur missions alone.⁸⁴ Considering the mutinies consisted of nearly all junior rank and file soldiers, it is likely that many were recruited within the last few years.

Soldiers also alleged that there is not a fair method of rewards and promotions within the military. For example, one military source expressed anger that despite having the top aptitude score he was passed over for officer training by others who he claimed were connected but less qualified.⁸⁵ Another raised specific concerns about the way individuals are selected for deployments. He complained that peacekeepers are chosen from among the senior officers' friends and relatives. He claims that even with a strong military record and twenty-six years of service he has never had the opportunity to deploy.⁸⁶ Another military source backed this up by stating, "if you do not know someone, you will never be assigned to an important mission."⁸⁷ With Burkina Faso increasing its contributions to foreign missions, this is a concern that will likely continue if the hierarchy does not address it.

Underlying these complaints is distrust towards officers who the junior soldiers viewed as endorsing and perpetuating a system that they perceive as based on favouritism. In interviews it was often unclear if they were referring to the officer corps as a whole or the senior officers specifically. When I asked one enlisted soldier if he could specify to me if the problems he was referring to were among the senior officers or all officers, he responded "some individual superiors are good, but as a group there are too many problems."⁸⁸ Interviewees were not shy to criticize senior officers, particularly. One soldier, speaking particularly about the senior officers stated

officers are taking advantage of their positions, driving big cars, living in big houses in Ouaga 2000 always going on foreign training opportunities, gaining more profit while the others are living like normal Burkinabé. The juniors work the most and gain the least, while the officers work the least

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Author interview with military source BB (former enlisted soldier, currently working in security sector), March 2012.

⁸⁶ Author interview with military source E (current enlisted soldier), March 2012.

⁸⁷ Author interview with military source AA (former officer, currently working in the security sector), March 2012.

⁸⁸ Author interview with military source E (current enlisted soldier), March 2012.

and gain the most, it should be the opposite. This creates a lot of frustration for privates and NCOs.⁸⁹

A junior soldier believed that most individuals got to a senior position through means other than merit, and therefore he explained that there is no respect for the senior officers among the rank and file.⁹⁰ The officers appeared to recognize that they had no control over their subordinates. When I asked soldiers where the officers were while the rank and file took to the streets, answers included “hiding” and “they ran away.” No one indicated that the individual officers attempted to regain their authority.

In addition to allegations of corruption and favouritism, some interviewees also felt that the indiscipline seen in the mutinies was a result of poor training. One military source specifically stated that part of the military training should be education about the role of the military. He stated “you have people that are trained and armed but not educated, they have no idea what being in the military means.”⁹¹ In his opinion soldiers need to be taught that the role of a soldier is to protect the citizens. The International Crisis Group also highlighted problems of training. They note that on average there is one officer and two NCOs to train 200 new recruits, suggesting that the quality of training is likely low.⁹²

A final contributing cause of the 2011 revolt, and previous mutinies, is the poor communication within the military. Colonel Nombre highlights the “communication gap between the bottom and the summit of the military” as a main cause for the 2006 mutinies.⁹³ This communication gap is somewhat intentional, as the pattern of internal revolts has created a culture of secrecy within the military. Information is spread more often through rumours than official means. Soldiers confirmed this trend by explaining that most of the news they were getting during the mutinies was from cell phone calls to

⁸⁹ Author interview with military source BB (former enlisted soldier, currently working in the security sector), March 2012; Ouaga 2000 is the wealthiest area of Ouagadougou and houses the Presidential Palace as well as numerous Western Embassies and expensive hotels.

⁹⁰ Author interview with military source E (current enlisted soldier), March 11, 2012.

⁹¹ Author interview with military source BB (former enlisted soldier, currently working in the security sector), March 2012.

⁹² *International Crisis Group*, “Burkina Faso: With or Without Compaoré, Times of Uncertainty,” 32.

⁹³ Nombre, “Civil-Military Relations and National Security in Burkina Faso: An Assessment,” 41.

their colleagues at other bases.⁹⁴ The International Crisis Group also focuses on the communication issues by explaining, “the rank and file rarely voice their day-to-day problems or express their discontent and so the administration never deals with even the most trivial issues, such as food quality.”⁹⁵ Insufficient communication contributed to soldiers’ dissatisfaction and the act of mutiny also served as a remedy for the problem, with soldiers using the mutinies to express their many frustrations.

7.8 The Exceptionally Uninterested Sectors

With such widespread participation in the mutinies, groups that did not become involved were the exception. This section will examine the notable cases of those that did not partake in the mutinies: officers and the gendarmerie.

During the crisis, media and security analysts were premature in their cries of an impending coup.⁹⁶ Although the mutinies largely crippled the capital, at no point did the military attempt to oust President Compaoré. Interviewees, both civilian and military, were unanimous in their opinion that the soldiers did not have a goal of overthrowing the president. A sample of these responses includes

The soldiers could have easily taken over but they didn’t, their goals were not about political gains but about monetary gains.

As a military man I can tell you these soldiers had no political ambitions.

This was not a well-planned or organized event, our soldiers know how to do a coup and this was no coup.

⁹⁴ Author interview with military source BB (former enlisted soldier, currently working in the security sector), March 2012.

⁹⁵ *International Crisis Group*, “Burkina Faso: With or Without Compaoré, Times of Uncertainty,” 33.

⁹⁶ A sample of such predictions include “Burkina Faso Next Regime to Fall?” *United Press International*, April 15, 2011; “A Coup in the Making in Burkina Faso?” *Stratfor*, April 16, 2011; Alex Thurston, “Burkina Faso’s Compaore Facing Perfect Storm?” *World Politics Review*, May 3, 2011.

The fact that they did not move to take control of the state was not due to an inability. There were numerous times throughout the months of mutinies that a coup seemed possible, if not probable. However, the mutineers were nearly all rank and file soldiers and they showed little interest in political power and did not appear to have a recognized leader amongst themselves.⁹⁷ The lack of leadership and organization was likely a result of the dispersed geographic nature of the mutinies and the lack of a specific common goal.

One junior soldier explained that “if there were officers involved there would still be problems now.”⁹⁸ He was implying that there would have been a coup or coup attempt. While it is not unheard of for a coup attempt to be orchestrated from the enlisted ranks, it is rare (and a successful coup by enlisted soldier is particularly rare). No interviewees gave a direct explanation for why they felt the officers did not become involved. However, I think the reasoning is implied through their above descriptions of problems within the military. The mutineers were frustrated over a system that they believed favours officers or others with connections to political leadership. Therefore, there would be little appeal for officers to try to change procedures that they benefit from. Similarly, as many officers have links to political leaders, there may have been little motivation to conduct a coup.

Additionally, if officers had considered making a move for political control, they may have had a difficult time harnessing the discontent of the rank and file soldiers. In the cases of Sierra Leone in 1992 and The Gambia in 1994, junior officers were able to utilize the frustrations of their subordinates but in both cases it was due to their direct links with the individuals. While enlisted ranks and junior officers appeared united in the 1980s in Burkina Faso, there is little indication of a similar bond in 2011. The explanation of military discontent, as explained in the previous section, as well as the actions during the mutinies demonstrates a divide between the enlisted ranks and officers. It is a divide that goes beyond the expected divisions in military hierarchies and is one which has become antagonistic.

⁹⁷ Author interview with military source Z (current enlisted soldier), March 2012; Author interview with military source E (current enlisted soldier), March 2012.

⁹⁸ Author interview with military source E (current enlisted soldier), March 2012.

As noted earlier, the gendarmerie was the only security branch that did not mutiny.⁹⁹ Part of the explanation may have to do with the role of the gendarmerie in former French colonies in West Africa. The gendarmerie serve as a military police and regularly have a double affiliation with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defence. Niagalé Bagayoko explains that the continued existence of the gendarmerie is controversial because it is often seen “to represent the continuation of a military presence in domestic security and therefore legitimise the involvement of the armed forces in internal security matters.”¹⁰⁰ A military source explained that due to this unique role the gendarmerie receive different, and in his opinion better, training than the other security services (Army, Air Force, and Police).¹⁰¹ Essentially they are double trained as soldiers and police officers, by attending both traditional military training as well as courses on internal laws and domestic matters. Therefore, this source believed the gendarmes are more conscious of their roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, the gendarmerie have arrest authority over both the military and the police (as well as other Ministries such as Customs or Forestry). Another source believed that because the gendarmes have a unique role in overseeing the discipline of the other security services, the gendarmerie leadership is much more strict than the other services.¹⁰² When I asked a military interviewee if pay was a factor in the difference in discipline between the military and gendarmerie, he did not seem to think it was a primary cause. He explained that the gendarmerie were paid a ‘little more’ than the military overall but also noted that this was a hard distinction to make because the pay for both groups varies based on their duties.¹⁰³

The unique and flexible role of the gendarmerie, as well as their arrest authority, has meant that the gendarmerie in many former French colonies have become closely

⁹⁹ Sources explained that there may have been a few individual gendarmes who revolted but no whole units.

¹⁰⁰ Niagalé Bagayoko, “Security Systems in Francophone and Anglophone Africa,” *IDS Bulletin* 43, N. 4 (July 2012), 69.

¹⁰¹ Author interview with military source BB (former enlisted soldier, currently working in the security sector), March 2012; confirmed in author interview with military source O (current officer), March 2013.

¹⁰² Author interview with military source AA (former officer, currently working in the security sector), March 2012.

¹⁰³ Author interview with military source BB (former enlisted soldier, currently working in the security sector), March 2012

linked to the ruling regimes.¹⁰⁴ Burkinabé interviewees explained that recruitment for the gendarmerie is more stringent than the other services, a trend consistent within other gendarmeries.¹⁰⁵ Discussing Francophone Africa in general, Bagayoko observes “The gendarmes generally enjoy a better reputation than the other security forces: they appear to be a disciplined corps respectful of hierarchy.”¹⁰⁶ This is consistent with two sources that explained there is more respect for gendarmerie leadership amongst the rank and file, a trait that was demonstrated during the mutinies. While army units throughout the country were rebelling against their leadership, the gendarmes stayed loyal to theirs. Several individuals noted that Djibril Bassolé was previously in charge of the gendarmerie and used this to make the argument that the gendarmes have strong and respectable leaders. Bassolé is now the Foreign Minister of Burkina Faso and a highly visible individual within the international community for his involvement in numerous conflict mediations, most recently between Malian rebels and the Malian government. The lack of gendarmerie involvement in the 2011 mutinies represent the unique role and training of the gendarmerie in Burkina Faso, which is consistent with other gendarmerie forces throughout the region.

7.9 Crisis Effects

The crisis of 2011 brought about many changes: some significant, some symbolic, and others unintentional. Although interviewees pointed out areas that still needed work, they were quick to acknowledge noticeable reforms since the 2011 crisis. Many interviewees commented on progress within the justice system, which was likely linked to several high profile cases against senior government officials that were ongoing at the time of the interviews.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, interviewees noted that police

¹⁰⁴ A good example of this trend can be found in Klaas van Walraven’s description of the formation of the Nigerien gendarmerie. Klaas van Walraven, *The Yearning for Relief: A History of the Sawaba Movement in Niger* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2013): 581-582.

¹⁰⁵ Bagayoko, “Security Systems in Francophone and Anglophone Africa,” 70.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ For example, in January of 2012 the Head of Customs, Ousmane Guiro, was arrested with \$4 million in cash in his house and removed from his position days later. Guiro’s case was particularly noteworthy

officers had been charged over the death of Justin Zongo, indicating less impunity for the security services. Other interviewees brought up economic changes such as reduction in prices of food. Government and military personnel noted that their salaries had been increased. Students observed that there was no longer a police presence on campus.

In addition to the more concrete examples of salaries, food prices or trials, civilian interviewees commented on less tangible changes in attitude. There were numerous statements about an overall change in the relationship between the government and citizens. Respondents seemed proud that their efforts had been recognized and empowered by the ability to pressure government reform. Below is a sampling of such statements.

Before [the events in 2011] you can do bad things with no justice, but not anymore....the government understands that they cannot rule like in the past.¹⁰⁸

Before the crisis the government didn't pay attention but since then they are more responsive, they now pay attention.¹⁰⁹

The citizens of Burkina Faso have also changed, they now know their rights... The government is now changed, it is now afraid.¹¹⁰

I am satisfied with the way it was handled, people now realize they have the power.¹¹¹

As earlier noted, in the midst of the military revolts, Compaoré ordered the largest political shake up in his twenty-four years in power. He dissolved the

because he had been questioned by the judicial department in 2008 for fraudulent tax evasion but never charged, allegedly due to his "well placed friends." (as quoted in "Ousmane Guiro, l'ex-directeur general des Douanes incarcéré, *Jeune Afrique*, January 8, 2012). Additionally days before the start of interviews the Minister of Justice was charged with abusing his employee. This case was particularly significant to people because the accuser was from a lower social class, symbolizing the rights of the lower classes.

¹⁰⁸ Author Interview with Burkinabé academic (lecturer in history), March 2012.

¹⁰⁹ Author interview with Bazie Bassolina, Secretary General CGT-B, March 2012.

¹¹⁰ Author interview with Professor B, March 2012

¹¹¹ Author interview with Member of Ministère Chargé des Relations avec Le Parlement et des Réformes Politiques, March 2012

government and appointed a new Prime Minister, cabinet, and 13 new state governors. While on the surface this seems significant, in reality many of the same old political hands were simply reshuffled. For example, of the 29 member “new” cabinet, 13 were part of the previous cabinet.¹¹² This sleight of hand did not go unnoticed. For example, one student stated, “both the old and new government is here to preserve the role of Blaise Compaoré. So is there a change? Yes, but it is just as bad as before.”¹¹³ Compaoré also appointed himself to the position of Minister of Defence, a move that gave him even more power than he had prior to the crisis.

Despite acknowledging improvements, most respondents did not think the reforms went far enough. Many noted that the initial decreases in food prices have crept back up and there have not been changes in employment opportunities. Therefore, the cost of living complaints still resonated with most. University students were particularly vocal about needing to push for more change. In a heated debate on campus, students loudly applauded and cheered the statement that the reforms are “just a manipulation by the government to keep us quiet, we are only seeing our banks, our food, if we want real change we must look beyond that, all the government did was lower the price of rice and we are satisfied, we must go beyond this.” Another followed this up by saying “we cannot talk about change when the same head is dictating the same body”, implying that it is time for the president to leave office.¹¹⁴ While university students in Burkina Faso as well as worldwide often tend to be the most politically vocal sectors of society, in the Burkinabé context it is important to take their voices into account because past demonstrations have often started with university students. Similarly, university students are of the same age and peer group as the rank and file soldiers involved in the mutiny and thus students seemed particularly aware of the mutinies and often supportive of their grievances.

Compaoré made similar changes within the defence sector as in the political realm by dismissing the Chiefs of Staff of the Army, Air Force, and Police (the Chief of the Gendarmerie kept his job due to the gendarmes’ loyalty during the mutinies).

¹¹² Simon Gongo, “Burkina Faso President Named Defense Minister in New Cabinet”, *Bloomberg*, April 22, 2011.

¹¹³ Student focus group conducted by author, March 2012.

¹¹⁴ Student debate, University of Ouagadougou, March 2012.

Sources explained that although the Army Chief of Staff in particular was unpopular, his removal did not placate the mutinying soldiers.¹¹⁵ Rank and file soldiers are far too removed from the Chief's of Staff to be largely effected by a shift in personnel at that level. Furthermore, a military officer explained that the "fired" senior officers were not actually removed from service, just rotated into a different position.¹¹⁶ Military interviewees acknowledged that there have been some immediate benefits from the mutinies. Junior soldiers reported that their salaries had increased (along with civil servants) and that some of the food issues have been resolved. The request to allow soldiers to purchase their own food, rather than have it provided by the military, was granted.

Another big change to come out of the mutinies, and one not expected by the soldiers, was the firing of hundreds of soldiers and police. Although the number of "bad seeds" removed from service was high, it is by no means all of those involved in the mutinies. It was likely meant to serve as a lesson for those contemplating a future mutiny as much as for punishment for those involved.

A Burkinabé military source also noted that the government has taken measures to make it physically more difficult for soldiers to mutiny, or at least to cause such widespread violence. There was concern over how easily soldiers throughout the country were able to access ammunition. Therefore, the ammunition is now more centralized, most secured at one base rather than spread throughout the number of smaller bases and outposts. He claims that although soldiers still carry guns, few have any ammunition.¹¹⁷

High-level personnel changes, mass dismissals, and increased payments to soldiers do not address the systemic problems within the military. One military source summed it up nicely by saying "the problem is deeper than just removing a person, it is

¹¹⁵ Author interview with military source BB (former enlisted soldier, currently working in the security sector), March 2012.

¹¹⁶ Author interview with military source O (current officer), March 2012.

¹¹⁷ Author interview with military source BB (former enlisted soldier, currently working in the security sector), March 2012; *International Crisis Group*, "Burkina Faso: With or Without Compaoré, Times of Uncertainty," 33.

the same structures, the same people and the same philosophy.”¹¹⁸ Another enlisted soldier noted, “there is still a part of the army that cannot be touched,” suggesting that the elite units are still above the law.¹¹⁹ The indiscipline and lack of respect for military authority resulting from perceptions of corruption and favouritism will be a much harder fix, likely taking years. When I asked the military sources what changes they would like to see one responded “a new generation of officers” and another said, “we need new blood.” Yet another military interviewee backed up these sentiments by explaining “we need new young officers with education, a new way of doing things, in one word we need new.”

As of 2013 the government was still in the process of reviewing options for changes within the military organization and working groups have been established to assess the situation and make recommendations. An annual conference to discuss ongoing concerns within the military has been established and two iterations have been held (in September of 2012 and 2013).¹²⁰ A major restructuring of the military would be significant as well as unusual. Most militaries do not make large structural changes as a result of mutinies. It indicates that the government acknowledges that the mutinies represented severe problems within the military. Additionally, the theme for the first annual military conference was communication, which shows that the military hierarchy recognizes that there is poor internal communication within the military.¹²¹

It is too early to tell if the soldiers will get the “newness” they desire but based on interviews it appears both civilians and military personnel are already growing restless. Unlike The Gambia where most people did not think a mutiny was imminent, in Burkina Faso both civilian and military respondents felt that another mutiny or civilian uprising was likely. Some individuals made bold statements such as “to be sincere, this is just the beginning” and “the crisis is not behind us, it is in front of us.”¹²²

¹¹⁸ Author interview with military source BB (former enlisted soldier, currently working in the security sector), March 2012.

¹¹⁹ Author interview with military source E (current enlisted soldier), March 2012.

¹²⁰ “Forces armées nationales (FAN) du Burkina Faso: La discipline faisant la force principale,” November 11, 2013, <http://www.lefaso.net/spip.php?article56669&rubrique0>

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Author interview with Moussa Diallo, Secretary General of Social issues for CGT-B, March 2012; Interview with Professor A, March 2012.

A source within the Burkinabé military described the series of mutinies since the 1990s and pointed out that with each successive demonstration, the military has become more violent. He said he is worried that if this pattern continues the next round could be devastating to the country.¹²³ Several other interviewees shared this opinion with responses such as “next time it will be worse” and “if it happens again I think it will be a full revolution.”

The most common prediction from both military and civilian interviewees was that another crisis could occur if President Compaoré ran in the 2015 election. Based on Article 37 of the Burkina Faso constitution, Compaoré’s current term is the last he is eligible for. However, there is much speculation that he will attempt to change Article 37 to allow himself to run for another term. Opposition groups have already been very vocal about opposing any attempt to change the constitution but Compaoré’s party has a sizeable majority in the parliament, which could allow them to make changes without minority party support. Such a blatant manipulation of the law on Compaoré’s behalf would likely trigger many of the same feelings of injustice as did the 2011 (and 1999) crisis. As noted throughout this chapter, the military and civilian sectors have a tendency to play off each other when it comes to countering the government and thus a strong opposition to modifying the constitution from either group could trigger a response from the other, causing another and potentially even more severe crisis.¹²⁴

There was also widespread concern and rumours that the hundreds of soldiers and police removed from their positions after the mutinies will cause more violence throughout Burkina Faso. These concerns came predominately from youth and students although several professionals mentioned them as well. Comments about this potential problem include

The dismissing of so many soldiers can bring about insecurity. In the countryside I heard there is some [former soldiers] with bad intentions.

¹²³ Author interview with military source AA (former officer, currently working in security sector), March 2012.

¹²⁴ Another scenario that many respondents thought likely was that President Compaoré could turn over power to his younger brother, Francios Compaoré. They mockingly called him “le petit président.” All individuals who mentioned this potential move found it unacceptable. This scenario could be especially volatile as Francios Compaoré is largely speculated to have been involved in the death of journalist Norbert Zongo.

Former soldiers become thieves, we all know someone who is victim of them, they will not hesitate to attack this country.

I met one of them [former soldier] out drinking, it is scary, they have a lot of training.

Those that were arrested, we do not know what they are planning. They can come back. In the past they were shooting in the air but what if this time they shoot people.

Soldiers have also expressed their concern over the dismissals by circulating pamphlets in the barracks in 2012. One called for the release and reintegration of “all dismissed soldiers.”¹²⁵ Another denounced arbitrary dismissals, specifically noting that some of the dismissed soldiers were not in Burkina Faso at the time of the mutiny.¹²⁶

The fact that so many respondents felt another crisis was imminent or had specific scenarios in mind in which a democratic transition would be aborted shows a continued distrust in the government. Furthermore, there appeared to be a lack of confidence that the government could adequately counter a rebellion or wave of crime. Despite firmly remaining in power through the mutinies and protests, the “crisis of confidence” appears to still have a strong hold on the population.

7.10 The Resilient Civilian Military Relationship

The close links between the civilian demonstrations and military mutinies in Burkina Faso allows for an analysis of how the mutinies affected civil-military relations. Much of the destruction and violence caused by the mutineers was at the expense of the civilian population. There were dozens of injured civilians, numerous reported rapes, and large-scale damage to shops and private residences. The local media ran pictures daily of soldiers wielding heavy weapons on the streets, civilians with bloody injuries caused by soldiers, and shops trashed by mutineers.

¹²⁵ *International Crisis Group*, “Burkina Faso: With or Without Compaoré, Times of Uncertainty,” 33.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

Between those that experienced the mutinies first hand and those that heard of it through the extensive local media coverage, it would be easy to conclude that the mutinies severely damaged the civil-military relationship in Burkina Faso. However, based on interviews this does not appear to be the case. Many civilian interviewees were unexpectedly sympathetic towards the soldiers. Several interviewees expressed the opinion that although the violence enacted by the military was wrong, they were forced into the situation because they have no other way to express their complaints. A sample of such comments include:

They [soldiers] should be able to strike, our government does not allow the soldiers to strike.

We are a democratic country, it is unfair that they [soldiers] cannot participate.

Those soldiers, they were fighting to claim their rights too, even a soldiers needs to take care of his family, the hierarchy is the problem.

Many felt that the military is poorly treated. For example, a Burkinabé professor stated that he was not surprised by what happened because “those guys are abused, have no rights, they have bad living conditions, it is all they can do.”¹²⁷ Another academic furthered this point by stating, “all Burkinabé should be treated equal but the military are often treated badly and they don’t have their rights.” He added that their actions should be condemned and they should have brought their case to the judge. He believes “all this happened because the military does not trust the justice system of Burkina Faso.”¹²⁸ Despite nearly every civilian interviewee stating that they were shocked and worried by the violence unleashed by the mutinying soldiers, they were surprisingly understanding of the causes and placed the overall blame on the government.

It was also a trend for civilian respondents to deny the wrongdoings by the military. One civilian expressed the belief that criminals took advantage of the chaotic situation to steal and cause damage that the military later was blamed for. Another stated, “some gangsters spoiled the name of our military.”

¹²⁷ Author interview with Professor A, March 2012.

¹²⁸ Author interview with Professor B, March 2012.

A final way to demonstrate the unique overlap between the civilian and military sectors in Burkina Faso is the way in which the mutinies featured in popular culture. Less than a year after the mutinies, there was both a play and a film released about the event. This fictionalized account, titled “Le Foulard Noir” was showing nightly at variously cinemas throughout the country in spring of 2012, indicating that the mutiny was of widespread interest in Burkina Faso and the story had commercial value. The movie focuses solely on the mutinies, not the wider civilian protests (which may have touched more on sensitive political issues). It follows a family in Ouagadougou and portrays how the mutinies affected their lives. The film does not censor what went on during the mutinies. It graphically (in slow motion) depicts civilians being killed by stray bullets from the weapons of mutineers and soldiers raping women. However, not all of the military is portrayed as villains. There are times when “Le Foulard Noir” also paints a complex relationship between the military and civilians. For example, there is a scene when soldiers visit the family of a civilian killed in the mutiny to offer condolences and another where soldiers explain that they also have relatives who had been victimized in the rebellion.

There are several unusual aspects of the film. One is that it received partial funding from the office of President Compaoré.¹²⁹ Whereas it is common for leaders to try to hide mutinies or at least not publicize them, Compaoré has done the opposite. Additionally, the movie used current soldiers as the extras in the film, allowing them to role-play as mutineers. At the end of the film there are pictures of the actual destruction caused by the mutinies throughout the country. In addition to having been shown at cinemas, “Le Foulard Noir” was also aired at barracks throughout the country. This thesis has highlighted mutinies as a form of communication and the role that communication can potentially play in reducing the prevalence of mutinies. “Le foulard noir” provides another form of communication and one in which the government can help shape the public narrative of the mutinies. While it is unclear what level of involvement the government had in the movie script, they seemed to endorse the film by

¹²⁹ “‘Le foulard noir,’ un film adapté de la mutinerie au Burkina a reçu l’onction du président,” <http://burkina24.com/news/2012/02/14/‘le-foulard-noir’-un-film-adapte-de-la-mutinerie-au-burkina-a-recu-l-onction-du-president/> February 14, 2012.

having the Prime Minister, various government officials, and military officers in attendance of the film's premier on February 9, 2012.¹³⁰ Additionally, the film was advertised on the official government webpage and included pictures of a cinema screening full of soldiers in uniform.¹³¹

In statements to the press the director, Boubacar Diallo, clearly indicates that he has little sympathy for the mutineers. He said the mutinies injured the image of Burkinabé integrity.¹³² He noted the film is meant to expose the "ugliness" and allow society to "reflect together."¹³³ He explained that the film will help the younger generation raise its level of civic consciousness.¹³⁴ In many ways the film seemed to shame the military and screening the movie at the barracks indicates that the government was keen to get the message directly to the military. As these mutinies had very direct effects on the civilian population, it may also serve as a valuable way to create an open public dialogue about the events. The Prime Minister, Luc Adolphe Tiao, noted that a film on such a hot topic presents difficulties but said the film should be seen as a call for forgiveness, not as a way to reignite resentments.¹³⁵ These statements, by both the director and top politicians, indicate that the film was meant to be more than just a cinematic reproduction of the event.

In February 2013, nearly two years after the mutinies, a popular Burkinabé rap group called Waga3000 put out a music video, which recreates the mutinies. Whereas "Le Foulard Noir" appears to have been marketed mostly within Burkina Faso, Waga3000 has much wider appeal. They tour internationally and their music and videos can be purchased digitally on many major music sites. The song, titled "Voir sombrer ses fils," takes on a much more political tone than "Le Foulard Noir," criticizing both leaders and soldiers. They focus on the issue of injustice and one of the two rappers is wearing a shirt with Norbert Zongo's (the journalist killed in 1999) name on it. Similar

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ The article can be found at this address: <http://www.gouvernement.gov.bf/spip.php?article920>

¹³² Director's statement can be found at this address: <http://www.trophees-francophones.org/#!le-foulard-noir/c1u9>

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ The article can be found at this address: <http://www.gouvernement.gov.bf/spip.php?article920>

¹³⁵ Director's statement can be found at this address: <http://www.trophees-francophones.org/#!le-foulard-noir/c1u9>

to "Le Foulard Noir," the military is not portrayed as one-dimensional. In some parts soldiers are shown attacking civilians and one scene implies rape. Yet, a final scene shows a soldier and civilian embracing. Additionally, the musicians are wearing parts of military uniforms, despite criticizing their actions. This supports earlier assessments of the overlap often seen between the military and civilian populations, especially among youths.

These two examples, both of which are high quality productions, show that there is popular intrigue within the civilian realm about the mutinies. They also represent the complex relationship between civilians and military in Burkina Faso. The nuanced relationship between the two can be partially linked to the unique historic relationship, as previously discussed. Additionally, there was a shared sense of dissatisfaction towards the current condition, which both groups demonstrated against in 2011.

7.11 Conclusion

In the cases of Sierra Leone and The Gambia specific incidents (war conditions in Sierra Leone and peacekeeping non-payment in The Gambia) unveiled larger concerns within the military. However, in Burkina Faso for the vast majority of soldiers involved in the 2011 mutinies, there was no specific issue that triggered the response. There was no indication that soldiers were paid irregularly nor were there specific concerns over deployment pay or any immediate changes to military regulations. It took relatively little to ignite hundreds, if not thousands, of soldiers throughout the country into acts of indiscipline and often criminality, suggesting severe problems within the military.

The 2011 mutinies in Burkina Faso help further the argument made throughout this thesis that mutinies need to be viewed as more than demands for material concessions. Soldiers were inspired to revolt, in part due to a sense of injustice towards a system in which they believed represented corruption and favouritism. These problems are deeply ingrained in the military and affect recruitment, promotions, and selection of opportunities such as deployments. The perception of corruption led to a

lack of authority and legitimacy amongst the officers in the eyes of their subordinates. The division among the ranks was demonstrated during the mutinies, in which only rank and file soldiers participated. Furthermore, the mutineers conducted targeted attacks on several high-ranking officers' residences. While the mutinies in Burkina Faso were part of a history of revolts, the government response in 2011 was unprecedented. The mass dismissals following the mutinies set an example for soldiers contemplating future mutinies, however more will need to be done to restore confidence and respect between the ranks and their officers.

The sense of injustice amongst the soldiers was mirrored in civilian demonstrations. The two sectors did not show solidarity in their actions throughout the crisis, yet there seemed to be a mutual distaste for the top levels of the hierarchy, both political and military. The rank and file soldiers and working class civilians also shared mutual concerns over a growing cost of living. A sense of sympathy for the mutineers and their cause by many civilians was represented through interviews and examples of popular culture's portrayal of the events. In the case of Burkina Faso the relationship between civilians and the military (particularly the lower classes and lower ranks) is part of a history of overlap between the sectors. The inspiration that the mutineers likely drew from the civilian movements is also part of a pattern in the region, as explained in Chapters Two and Three. This trend will be particularly important if Compaoré decides to run for office in 2015 because opposition groups will likely attempt to mobilize people against a change to the Constitution, which has the potential of triggering a military response as well.

Chapter Eight- Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This thesis has examined a topic that is “under-analyzed” within military history in general and particularly neglected in an African context.¹ While existing mutiny research has been criticized for focusing only “on the particularities of historical examples,” my research has veered from this trend by identifying and analyzing patterns of mutiny across a half century.² The broad mutiny dataset was then supplemented with case studies, which allowed for a deeper understanding of the context of the mutiny and the viewpoint of those involved. This research design anchors microanalysis of specific events within broader patterns of military behaviour and the role of the military in African states.

I have made a case throughout this thesis that mutinies deserve separate analysis from coups due to varying participants, tactics, and goals. The differences are visually highlighted when the two events are charted across time, as demonstrated in Figure 1.3 of the Introduction. Here we can see that coups and mutinies have not followed the same patterns and there is an inverse relationship between the two, in particular in the 1990s. However, despite attempting to make a break from coups, the divorce was never complete and coups continually appear throughout the thesis. For example, coups or threats of coups played a part in each of the case studies, although in a different manner in each case. This reflects the often-close links between the two events. Both mutinies and coups can be seen as actions that fall along a continuum of military indiscipline, but their trajectory on this continuum is not predetermined.³ A coup can be one potential outcome of a planned mutiny, either directly as the case of Sierra Leone demonstrated or it can intensify divisions within the military and contribute to a coup in a more subtle

¹ Ankersen, “Beyond Mutiny? – Instrumental and Expressive Understandings of Contemporary ‘Collective Indiscipline’ 113.

² Ibid.

³ Parsons, *The 1964 Army Mutinies and the Making of Modern East Africa*, 5.

fashion, as was the case in The Gambia. However, the majority of mutinies in the dataset were not immediate predecessors to coups, confirming my argument that mutinies are not simply the first stage of a coup.

The line between coups and mutinies was drawn in the most distinct fashion by soldiers themselves, both during interviews and within their public statements during mutinies. The need to distinguish themselves from coup leaders can be seen partially as self-protection (since a coup is a more severe crime than mutiny) but the soldiers also clearly showed a belief (backed up with examples) that coups were often unhelpful in addressing their specific grievances. Therefore, while acknowledging the links between coups and mutinies, this thesis has examined mutinies as a distinct tactic used mostly by rank and file soldiers to negotiate their conditions.

8.2 Research Contributions

This thesis has contributed to filling gaps in the existing literature in three ways. The first is by adding Africa-specific analysis to the wider literature on mutinies. Most existing research on mutinies is Western-centric and often uses cases from past centuries. While there is overlap in the general themes of mutinies in a Western historic context and a modern African context, there are also key differences. The differences are significant because they deal with the more practical issues of when, where, and how soldiers mutiny. If existing studies were used to anticipate African mutinies, analysts and military leadership would look at battlefields and naval ships for warning signs of mutinies. However, as this thesis has demonstrated, African mutinies instead generally occur in capital cities during times of peace. West and Central African mutinies often coincide with civilian unrest, a pattern highlighted in Chapter Three as well as in the case study of Burkina Faso in 2011. Part of the explanation for the pattern is that there are often shared economic concerns between the civilian sectors and junior ranks of the military. Additionally, the duties and lifestyles of the junior ranks often place them in close contact with civilians, which facilitate “the transfer of habits and attitudes from

one to the other.”⁴ This may be particularly the case in a modern African context as the role of African militaries in protecting the regime (rather than the state), has resulted in a high number of military personnel in urban city centres, and capital cities in particular.

While some of my broad findings are similar to mutiny research in a non-African context, the origins are often unique to West and Central Africa. For example, both my research and research on non-African mutinies have concluded that underlying most mutinies is a sense of injustice. In West and Central Africa the perception of injustice is often closely linked to the elite status of many senior officers, which is at severe odds with the lifestyles of the rank and file soldiers. As Chapter Two explained, this divide has developed as a result of a history of military involvement in politics in the region. Understanding this context is significant because it shifts the fault of mutinies away from the dominant (Western) view of individual command responsibility to a more systemic problem involving growing gaps between the ranks.

Secondly, this thesis has contributed to the military history of the case study countries. Many of the specific mutinies detailed in the chapters on Sierra Leone, The Gambia, and Burkina Faso were events that may have received short attention in the media or a passing remark in academic works but have never been examined in detail. This is perhaps unsurprising, as military hierarchies and political leadership often do not want to draw attention to a mutiny and regularly try to move on quickly after one has occurred. The case studies in this thesis have countered this trend by examining individual mutinies in detail and placing the events into political and military context of the time. Additionally the case studies have shown some of the longer-term effects that mutinies can have. In each case, a mutiny was not a lone event, but rather part of a series of mutinies or other acts of indiscipline. In many of the mutinies in the case studies only the material concerns of the mutineers were addressed and similar accusations of corruption or leadership complaints were a continual theme in subsequent mutinies. In several of the case studies, mutinies led directly or in the near term to major political changes.

⁴ Parker, “Mutiny and Discontent in the Spanish Army of Flanders 1527-1607,” 51.

The final broad contribution, and the one I will focus on the most in this conclusion, is a new look at the junior ranks. Mutinies provide a unique glimpse into a group whose voice is normally and intentionally stifled through a system of strict hierarchy. Mutinies serve as rare insight into the way junior ranks view their conditions. Additionally, mutineers reveal what they expect from their military leaders as well as from political leadership, whom they often directly approach during mutinies.

While scholarly work on African militaries was popular during the 1960s and 1970s, the perspective was usually from the officer corps.⁵ The “process of diffusion of force away from the state and official armies...on the African continent in the 1980s and 1990s” coincided with decreased academic attention on militaries. Academic focus shifted from African militaries to rebel groups and non-state combatants. Within the structures of these groups the junior ranks have been acknowledged and in many cases researched (for example, studies on child soldiers or junior ex-combatants). However, the intrigue with these junior members did not lead to a similar academic focus on the junior ranks of state militaries, and enlisted soldiers continue to “remain invisible.”⁶ This is a significant oversight considering the junior ranks of the military are the “physical production of force.”⁷ They are the individuals that the international community is largely entrusting with peacekeeping missions and the junior ranks are the primary defence against an external attack. Therefore, it is important to understand common concerns within this sector as internal tensions and low morale can also hinder their effectiveness.

This thesis has suggested that mutinies serve as a way for junior ranks to communicate with their superiors. By mutinying, soldiers draw attention to problems that have gone unaddressed through the normal chain of command. This assessment was supported in Chapter Two with an evaluation of common tactics used by mutineers. I demonstrated that mutineers usually use bold tactics, which the government would find hard to ignore. For example, kidnapping political leaders and holding strategic, public

⁵ For example, classic texts from this period, such as *Barrel of a Gun* (1970) by Ruth First, *The Nigerian Military: A Sociological Analysis of Authority and Revolt* (1971) by Robin Luckham, and *Military Regimes in Africa* (1975) by W.F. Gutteridge, all place heavy emphasis on the officer corps, with limited analysis of the actions of the rank and file.

⁶ Hutchful and Bathily, “Introduction,” in *The Military and Militarism in Africa*, VI.

⁷ Hutchful, “Institutional Decomposition and Junior Ranks’ Political Action in Ghana,” 248.

locations are favourite tactics of mutineers. However, these are also tactics that usually do not cause long-term damage. This is also intentional because mutineers ultimately want to keep their position in the military. Mutineers often attempt a balancing act by trying to push the government far enough to force their demands but not to the point where the government will counter attack with force or issue severe punishments. In an attempt to force the government into a dialogue about their complaints, they threaten violence while often refraining from the use of violence. Yet this is a fine line to walk, especially in mass mutinies, which involve a variety of participants and individualized goals. As mutinies regularly take place in urban centres, civilians unrelated to the cause of the mutiny are typically the victims if mutinies turn violent.

Since mutineers want to grab attention, the act itself is not particularly secretive, especially at the execution phase. However, even in the planning phase mutineers often send direct warnings to military or political leadership in hopes that their issues will be resolved before committing a mutiny. This thesis provided examples of Nigerian soldiers approaching the media to warn of a revolt and Sierra Leonean soldiers sending letters to the Ministry of Defence (and copies to foreign embassies) with similar threats. The pattern can also be seen beyond the West and Central African region. For example, soldiers in Tanganyika had approached State House twice prior to the 1963 mutinies in an attempt to seek an audience with the president over their grievances.⁸ Similarly, “anonymous letters of grievance had been emanating from the army for some weeks” before the 1963 mutiny, but “they were considered no cause for alarm.”⁹

These early warnings that mutineers often give show that mutinies in many cases are not immediate reactions. This counters some of the classic studies on mutinies, such as work by Geoffrey Parker as well as more recent work by Joel Hamby, both of which portray mutinies as reactions to immediate hardships and place heavy emphasis on environmental conditions.¹⁰ Instead, my research has shown that in many cases mutinies in West and Central Africa are not spontaneous but instead logical and planned actions.

⁸ Nestor Luanda, “The Tanganyika Rifles and the Mutiny of January 1964,” 203.

⁹ First, *The Barrel of a Gun*, 206.

¹⁰ Parker, “Forward” in *Rebellion, Repression, Reinvention: Mutiny in Comparative Perspective*, viii; Joel Hamby, “The Mutiny Wagon Wheel: A Leadership Model for Mutiny in Combat,” *Armed Forces and Society* 28, no. 4 (Summer 2002).

Mutinying soldiers take risks in conducting the revolt, which is universally illegal under military codes, but they are also often cautious. Soldiers mutiny when they believe there is a reasonable chance of success and therefore it is not a reckless or impulsive action but rather a strategic one.

If mutinies are viewed as a form of communication, the logical follow-up question is 'what are they trying to say?' The thesis has shown that most mutineers in the region object to aspects of their daily conditions. Grievances over pay or military living conditions are the most common complaints amongst mutineers. However, I have also argued that too often military or political leadership focus only on these material complaints. Academics have also been guilty of simplifying mutinies to demands for material redress. For example in the conclusion of *Barrel of a Gun*, Ruth First writes

As long as the army remains in the barracks, or drilling on the parade grounds, its command structure and military discipline hold it intact—short of the pay mutiny, that is. Once an army enters government, the possession of power proceeds to divide it: army cohesion disappears as soon as the army stops performing the function for which it was drilled.¹¹

First acknowledges the significance of a mutiny by noting that it could challenge the cohesion of the military but also downplays the action by describing it as a "pay mutiny" and failing to give further attention to the act. The term 'pay mutiny' does not require much explanation, as the cause and solution are both implied. This represents a common belief, especially in early independence years, that revolts by the rank and file are generally straightforward and do not require much investigation.

My research has argued for a move away from 'pay revolts' and 'pay mutinies' by showing that the material grievances are usually linked to perceptions of injustice and signal deeper discontent in the military. Junior ranks regularly blame their officers when they are unpaid, at times directly accusing them of stealing parts of their salary. Similarly, grievances over living conditions are regularly accompanied by claims of economic mismanagement by their superiors. Whereas material demands are relatively easy to address (assuming the government has the money), the divisions between the

¹¹ First, *The Barrel of a Gun*, 436.

ranks, which regularly form around accusations of corruption and favouritism, are more difficult and time-intensive to resolve.

Chapter Two explained that the divisions between the ranks, which are often revealed in mutinies, correspond with the manner in which militaries have developed in the region. A history of military involvement in politics throughout West and Central Africa has resulted in close ties between senior military leaders and politicians. The relationship often includes significant financial opportunities for senior officers leading the military to be seen as a powerful, if not prestigious, organization in most African states. However, the junior ranks often do not share in the benefits and regularly live in meagre conditions. The rank and file soldiers are in an unusual position in that they are part of a powerful organization but they often do not see as many tangible benefits from their membership as the senior ranks. This becomes particularly problematic when there are limited opportunities to move up the ladder. Perceptions of injustice at a system in which they feel advantages the senior ranks often fuels mutinies. Senior military leadership have been a key complaint of the rank and file soldiers as well as a target during the mutinies.

Mutineers often express the idea that their leadership have broken the implicit contract in which the hierarchy will take care of soldiers' welfare and pay in return for discipline and obedience. Mutineers then justify their disobedience with the observation that officers have also neglected their end of the deal. This trend appears particularly prevalent in deployment related mutinies due to soldiers' heightened sense of entitlement alongside the increased dangers of the mission, as explained in Chapter Four.

Although a mutiny is a revolt against superiors, mutineers' actions should not be seen as an attack on the hierarchy itself. Mutineers regularly show respect for the hierarchy, while still objecting to individuals or particular behaviour within their chain of command. This affirmation of hierarchy was especially evident in the case study of the Tiger unit in Sierra Leone in both their obedience to their immediate officers and in the creation of the junta leadership based on rank. Nestor Luanda observed a similar trend in the 1963 Tanganyika mutinies when he stated that there was "continual efforts of the mutineers to recreate (rather than destroy) hierarchy- even to the point of

promoting themselves- while at the same time attempting to negotiate with 'legitimate authority' over the heads of their officers."¹² Similar to the Tanganyika mutinies, in mutinies in West and Central Africa soldiers may exhibit bold tactics but their requests are generally not radical. For example, mutineers often request promotion but usually only one rank, not a severe increase, suggesting that they value the hierarchy.

Mutineers do not ask for a system in which all ranks are equal but rather identify specific concerns within their terms of service. By doing so they can be seen as "appeals to authority, rather than rejections of it."¹³ This provides an opportunity for the government or military leadership to address these issues and also provides the possibility for a stronger hierarchy to emerge from a mutiny. However, often only the material issues are addressed, allowing the divisions and suspicions among the ranks to grow. In cases like Burkina Faso, mutinies have become a pattern in which the same complaints are recycled and each subsequent mutiny has increased in violence.

While dynamics between the ranks are an important aspect of mutinies, this thesis also placed emphasis on the relationship between junior ranks and civilians. Although the junior ranks are at times in direct opposition to civilians (for example, when tasked to put down mass protests), they are often also in close daily contact with them. As a result of military housing shortages, junior ranks often live in town (instead of bases) and spend their free time in the same places as their civilian peers. The ways in which the rank and file seem to straddle both the military and civilian sectors is apparent in mutinies. Mutineers often borrow tactics that are common in civilian demonstrations as well as utilize their military training. For example, they regularly gather in public spaces or near political offices and make public statements through spokesmen, similar to civilian organizations. However, their military membership is also regularly used to intimidate and warn of their ability to unleash violence, which they visualize by brandishing weapons.

Chapter Three demonstrated that it is not just civilian protest tactics that mutineers make use of but in the 1990s particularly, mutineers also borrowed themes from popular political messages. Just as civilians demonstrated growing awareness of

¹² Luanda, "The Tanganyika Rifles and the Mutiny of January 1964," 203.

¹³ Iliffe, *Honour in African History*, 245.

corruption and calls for political accountability, soldiers also expressed similar issues within their military environment. In public statements made by mutineers they often referred to elections, international organizations, and issues of rule of law, all topics that had gained attention in the civilian realm. My analysis of mutinies in the 1990s takes a slightly different perspective from scholars who argue that the democratization movement failed to attract the military masses.¹⁴ While I do not claim that junior soldiers were in strong support of the movement, I have demonstrated that junior soldiers were in some ways attracted to themes of the movement. They expressed their awareness of the popular political themes through public statements during mutinies and often instrumentalized aspects of the movement in their own campaigns. This trend extends beyond the 1990s and the case study of Burkina Faso in 2011 also showed an overlap between civilian and military grievances over the justice system.

8.3 Future of Mutinies in West and Central Africa

The original data in this thesis, along with the summary of historical studies of mutinies presented in Chapter One, show the remarkable durability of mutiny as a tactic. It is a strategy that has been used by militaries throughout the globe for centuries and shows no signs of ceasing in West and Central Africa in the near term. While the timeframe of my mutiny dataset concluded in 2012, in 2013 there were at least three new mutinies in West Africa, which is more than the average number per year in the 2000s. In early 2014, soldiers in Sao Tome and Principe mutinied over grievances that are similar to other mutinies in the region. They called for better pay and living conditions, with specific complaints about the salaries and perks given to senior officers.¹⁵ With a dataset of sixty-six incidents, this research has shown that mutinies are not particularly rare occurrences in West and Central Africa. Although the conditions for mutinies are in some ways unique to each country's history and military,

¹⁴ Hutchful, "Military Issues in the Transition to Democracy," 608.

¹⁵ *Reuters*, "Sao Tome Names New Military Chief Amid Army Unrest," February 19, 2014.

there are also mutiny trends, which span across the region. These patterns can help to anticipate when there is a heightened chance of mutiny in the future.

Chapter Four, Five, and Six all highlighted the trend of mutinies linked to deployments, with particular emphasis on peacekeeping deployments. Peacekeeping missions have been widely supported by many African states for a variety of reasons including financial benefits, experience for the troops, as a means to relieve a bloated military, or as a gesture of goodwill. However, this thesis has also shown that these deployments often lead to increased grievances for a variety of reasons. The first is that soldiers on deployment have increased expectations and/or placed increased importance on previous expectations due to the heightened danger of the mission. For example, soldiers expect the hierarchy to provide them with proper equipment, logistics, and adequate leadership, which would be less necessary while stationed at home. However limited funding and logistical complications of deployments often mean that hierarchies are incapable of meeting these heightened expectations. Secondly, the significant pay increases that are earned on deployments lead to new complications. For example, soldiers have claimed the competition to participate in peacekeeping missions has created new avenues for corruption and favouritism. Examples throughout the thesis were given to demonstrate that soldiers often have false expectations about peacekeeping pay and conditions.

Thirdly, the multinational environment allows soldiers to directly compare their conditions with soldiers from other countries. This is a rare opportunity for rank and file soldiers in particular, as normally they would be unlikely to have much extended contact with colleagues from other countries. In the examples throughout this thesis, it is clear that rank and file peacekeepers receive information about the pay and conditions of other soldiers through daily interactions and conversations with colleagues from other countries. The soldiers generally compare themselves to countries within their region that also have a shared language and often-similar culture. For example, Burkinabé soldiers compared themselves to the Malians while the Gambians compared their conditions to the Nigerians.

The way the UN funds peacekeeping allows for easy comparison between the peacekeepers. The UN is transparent in their process of paying every country the same

amount per peacekeeper; however each country does not pay their peacekeepers the same amount. Soldiers from countries that pay on the low end of the scale often speculate as to why they receive less than other soldiers performing the same duties. These speculations and accusations are likely perpetuated by of a lack of official communication from the individual contributing countries to their troops. For example, soldiers in Sierra Leone have complained (in interviews for this thesis and to the media) that they do not understand what the surplus money is used for.

While many of the deployment related mutinies are unique to the deployment setting, like other mutinies in the region they primarily involve grievances over pay and conditions of service. Significantly, mutineers on deployments also typically place the blame on their officers (as opposed to the funding institutions or politicians). Therefore, below the surface of claims of unpaid deployment salary are growing divides and resentments between the ranks, which has the potential to cause additional problems, even if the mutineers receive their material demands.

The most recently formed mission on the continent, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which took over from the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) in July 2013, has experienced many of the same complications described in other multinational missions.¹⁶ There have been reports about “woeful lack of cash and logistics” and shortages of food for the deployed troops.¹⁷ Similar to other African peacekeeping missions, MINUSMA has resulted in fatalities among the African troops, with at least thirty deaths for the Chadian contingent.¹⁸ This mission already followed the pattern described in this thesis and experienced its first deployment related mutiny in September 2013 when 150 Chadian soldiers mutinied over pay and the length of deployment.¹⁹ With an increasing number of multinational missions on the continent, which involve international and regional

¹⁶ United Nations Security Council, SC/10870, December 20, 2012.

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2012/sc10870.doc.htm>

¹⁷ Jenny Vaughan, *AFP*, “Donors pledge \$455.5 mn for war-torn Mali,” January 29, 2013; Nicholas Ibekwe, “Hardship hits Nigerian troops in Mali as officers solicit food from locals,” *Premium Times*, February 12, 2013, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201302130996.html>

¹⁸ Xan Rice, “Chadian death toll in Mali rises,” *Financial Times*, February 25, 2013; “Chad says troops unsuited to guerilla war, quitting Mali,” *Reuters*, April 14, 2013.

¹⁹ “Chadian troops abandon north Mali posts in protest,” *Reuters*, September 18, 2013.

organizations, research on peacekeeping related mutinies is particularly timely and valuable.

Chapter Three demonstrated that mutinies occur more often in democratic states. Unlike the trend of mutinies following peacekeeping missions, mutinies that occur in democracies are not necessarily because democracies create new grievances. Instead, states that show respect for democratic principles and human rights provide a better environment for a successful mutiny. Democratic leaders are generally seen to be more responsive, which is necessary for a successful mutiny. Media freedoms, which are often associated with democratic states, can assist mutineers in delivering their message. Additionally, media can also serve to pressure governments to address the soldiers' grievances (as was the case in The Gambia in 1991 and 1992) or keep attention on their trials (as was the case in Niger in 2002 and Sierra Leone in 2013). States that show respect for human rights may also be deemed a physically safer environment to mutiny than states known to abuse human rights. In highly repressive regimes mutineers risk arrest without trial or execution. Although the international community and many citizens support and work towards a transition to more democratic political systems with increased civil liberties, this goal should not be seen as a cure for mutinies.

Lastly, mutinies have been a durable tactic because it is also an adaptable tactic. This thesis has examined mutinies over a fifty-two year period, during which the tactics commonly used by mutineers have changed. Soldiers have consistently used tactics that gain the attention of the military or political hierarchy. However, new technological advances have allowed soldiers new opportunities to spread their messages. From the 1990s onward mutineers have utilized the media more often and in recent years social media has gained traction within the military. These forums are particularly conducive to the desire of mutineers to spread the message about their grievances far and fast. Given the young age of many mutineers and increased internet access throughout the continent, future mutineers will likely increasingly turn to social media and new technologies as a means to communicate, both to their colleagues and to superiors. This trend could also be exciting and valuable for researchers of mutinies or militaries in general as it would provide more public insight into the internal workings of the state security organizations, which have always been exclusive.

New technologies such as cell phones have posed and will likely continue to pose new challenges to governments attempting to quell mutinies as cell phones make it much easier for soldiers to spread information quickly. For example, interviewed soldiers in Burkina Faso explained that mutinying soldiers in 2011 called their peers at other bases to find out what deal they had struck with the government. They explained that there were units that mutinied a second time after already making a negotiation because they found out, or at least heard rumours, that other units had received a better deal.²⁰ New technologies also makes it increasingly important for military hierarchies to communicate effectively with the junior ranks to alleviate misunderstandings which can quickly grow and spread with increased use of cell phone calls, text messages, emails, and social media.

My thesis has argued for two shifts in the way mutinies are viewed. I have suggested that they should be seen as signs of deeper problems within the military and a means of communicating these issues. However, this would not be a popular shift for many in the military. While I am using the rather neutral term “communication” to describe the desire for junior ranks to present their grievances to superiors, one soldier used the term “expose” to describe the goal of a mutiny. This single word highlights the divisions between the ranks that are often revealed in a mutiny and demonstrates the feelings of injustice that lie below the material demands of mutineers. Many in a hierarchy would not be keen to allow mutineers an open forum in which to elaborate on these perceived injustices, most of which they blame on their officers. It is therefore in the best interest of some to continue to treat mutinies as indiscipline or pay disputes in which the solution is punishment or payment (or a combination of both).

Although mutinies can be seen as a timeless tactic, there are regions that have been successful at reducing their occurrence. For example, Lawrence James notes that “mutiny has become an unfashionable crime” in a modern Western context.²¹ He explains that this is because “its causes have been removed” and hierarchies have often learned from their mistakes.²² However, mutiny has not lost its appeal within West and

²⁰ Author interviews with Burkinabé soldiers, 2012.

²¹ James, *Mutiny in the British and Commonwealth Forces, 1797-1956*, 3.

²² Ibid.

Central African militaries and there is no indication that they will become passé in the near term. A significant reduction in mutinies in the region is not an unreasonable goal but reducing mutinies would entail more than simply addressing the tangible demands, as has commonly been the strategy for resolution. It would also require tackling the root problems, which are often ingrained aspects of the military structure. This would admittedly not be an easy task as many of the class issues and favouritism that contribute to mutinies have developed through a history of close relations between military and political elites. However, without a change to the way that mutinies are viewed and dealt with, they will likely remain an “unfailing timely topic” in the region and hierarchies will be left anticipating the next revolt.²³

²³ Hathaway, *Rebellion, Repression, Reinvention: Mutiny in Comparative Perspective*, XI.

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Key Websites:

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Freedom House, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/>

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, <http://www.sipri.org/>

List of Interviews

Below is a list of interviews, in ascending chronological order, divided by country. This list only includes formal interviews, not casual conversations. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, I have intentionally kept the vast majority of the interviewees' names confidential.

Sierra Leone

Interviewee	Month/Year of Interview
Military Source G (Current Officer)	May 2011
Military Source H (Current Enlisted Soldier)	May 2011
Military Source I (Current Officer)	May 2011
Military Source J (Current Enlisted Soldier)	May 2011
Valentine Strasser (Former Officer and President of Sierra Leone, 1992-1996)	May 2011
Military Source L (Current Enlisted Soldier)	May 2011
Military Source W (Former Enlisted soldier, now works in security sector)	May 2011
Military Source Y (Current Enlisted Soldier)	May 2011
Military Source P (Current Officer)	May 2011
Military Source Q (Current Officer)	May 2011
Military Source T (Current Enlisted Soldier)	May 2011
Military Source S (Current Enlisted Soldier)	May 2011/April 2012
Military Source V (Current Enlisted Soldier)	April 2012
Military Source R (Current Enlisted Soldier)	April 2012
Military Source GG (Current Enlisted Soldier)	April 2012
Military Source HH (Current Enlisted Soldier)	April 2012
Military Source JJ (Current Officer)	April 2012
Military Source K (Current Enlisted Soldier)	April 2012
Military Source M (Current Officer)	April 2012
Military Source N (Current Enlisted Soldier)	April 2012

Gambia

Interviewee	Month/Year of Interview
Gambian academic	December 2011
Gambian government source	May 2012
Military Source A (Current Officer)	May 2012
Military Source B (Current Enlisted Soldier)	May 2012
Military Source DD (Current Enlisted Soldier)	May 2012
Military Source F (Former officer)	August 2012
Military Source D (Former Officer)	September 2012
Military Source EE (Former Enlisted Soldier)	October 2012
Military Source C (Former Enlisted Soldier)	October 2012
Professor Abdoulaye Saine	June 2012
Military Source FF (Current Officer)	November 2013

Burkina Faso

Interviewee	Month/Year of Interview
Military Source O (Current Officer)	March 2012
Military Source Z (Current Enlisted Soldier)	March 2012
Military Source E (Current Officer)	March 2012
Military Source AA (Former Officer, now works in security sector)	March 2012
Military Source BB (Former Enlisted soldier, now works in security sector)	March 2012
Military Source CC (International Officer in Burkina Faso)	March 2012
Chrysogone Zougmore, President of MBDHP	March 2012
Bazie Bassolina, Secretary General CGT-B	March 2012
Moussa Diallo, Secretary General of Social issues for CGT-B	March 2012
Member of Ministère Chargé des Relations avec Le Parlement et des Réformes Politiques	March 2012

General Manger of National Radio Station of Burkina Faso (Radio Burkina)	March 2012
Hamidou Idogo, Editor and Chief of <i>Journal du Jeudi</i>	March 2012
Editorial Chief for Ouaga FM (private radio station)	March 2012
Professor A (Burkinabé Professor of Politics)	March 2012
Professor B, (Burkinabé Professor of Law)	March 2012
Academic C (Burkinabé lecturer in History)	March 2012

In Burkina Faso I also conducted a focus group with university students. The group consisted of 7 men and 1 woman. Additionally, I attended a debate at the University of Ouagadougou titled “Ministerial Changes in Burkina Faso: What Do You Think?” The debate was specifically focused on the changes that followed the mutinies and included a lively discussion with roughly 30 university students in attendance.

